

LETTERS

FROM

FELICIA

TO

CHARLOTTE:

VOLUME SECOND.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

L O N D O N:

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LETTERS

FROM

THE

CHAMBERLAIN



BOOKS

BY THE

REV. JOHN G. ...

LONDON

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FELICIA
TO
CHARLOTTE.



VOLUME II.

LETTER XXV.

YOU wonder, Madam, at my silence; but the continual persecution of a number of visitors, has, for some time past, deprived me of every opportunity of retirement: so that, unless I could have found in my heart, to have sent you a letter, with only *Madam*, at the top, *I am married*, a little lower, and *your humble servant*, at the bottom, I was, indispensibly, obliged, to

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defer writing, till I could find leisure to be more particular.

My story, Madam, is now finish'd; I have been married these three weeks; and, from the serene tranquil state, I am in at present, you have no reason to expect any more romantic adventures. I have nothing now to do, with the affecting scenes of fond distress, the pangs of jealousy, or the fears of incurring a father's displeasure. My life begins to move on, in an even stream, my passions are all hush'd into a sweet serenity: regularity and order, peace and tranquillity, have taken up their residence in our happy dwelling. Can I give you, my dear friend, a more perfect picture of the highest degree of conjugal felicity, or represent a happiness more intensely charming? 'Tis true, my husband—O the awkward name!—has no right honourable titles to grace my story, and give a dignity to my newly acquired station; but this is an honour, that I can freely resign to you, without the least degree of envy; nor will your ladyship think me stupid, tho' I tell you, that I never, in my life, had an ambition of this kind. These all-potent words, these ravishing sounds of dignity, these pompous syllables, so full of nameless charms, after which so many sigh and

and languish in vain, appear of no moment; and I am as content, with the homely title of Mrs *Manly*, as any other person can be, with the more distinguished epithet of *my lady*. But whither am I rambling? Don't you think matrimony has turned my brain? I have been preaching so long upon my humility, that I had almost forgot, I was to give you an account of my affairs. To return, then, at last, to my story.

THE day before I was united to my dear Lucius, by those indissoluble bonds, which render our happiness as secure as our lives, his father came to pay us a visit. We received him with that deference, which is due to so near a relation; while his reformation greatly heightened the respect, my father thought himself obliged to pay him. And, indeed, whatever follies he had formerly been guilty of, he did not, at this time, want any qualification, to recommend him to the esteem of a good man; for his sentiments now shewed that he deserved it. He is really a gentleman of fine sense, of an easy agreeable address, and one that perfectly knows the world; nor does he seem to have wanted any natural advantage, for making a shining figure in it. As all my father's prejudices were now re-

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moved,

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moved, they soon grew intimate ; and Mr Manly express'd his acknowledgements, for my father's generosity to his son, with all the gratitude that could be inspired, by the tender overflowings of paternal affection; while my father returned his compliments, with an air of the utmost complacency and satisfaction. How much does a man of fine sense lose by his vices ! His abilities, which raise him above his neighbours, are, either, entirely suspended, or render him more ingeniously infamous, more generally hated and despised ; but he is no sooner reformed, than, if his reason is not impaired, by brutal indulgence, and a continued debauch, (which, alas ! is too often the case) his new-recovered virtues, polished by repentance, blaze out with a double lustre, and receive unutterable graces, from the sudden sublimity of his conceptions.

Mr. MANLY's acknowledgments were, however, too grave for the present situation of our affairs, and affected us, as well as himself, too much, for us to suffer him to proceed. We, therefore, as soon as possible, gave a turn to this part of the conversation, and Lucius, Melifont, and Amelia, entering the room immediately after, prevented its being resumed, and, at the same time, recovered that cheer-

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fulness, which had been interrupted by this too tender subject. The countenances of all our friends had an air of gaiety, which broke out into decent mirth; while Amelia, and I, were, by far, the dullest part of the company. They, at last, retired; when my good friend, attending me to my chamber, and seating herself by me, How is it with you, Felicia? said she smiling; I must confess myself a sad fool; for, tho' no conversation could possibly be more engaging, than that, in which we have spent the day, I have wished, a thousand times, for an opportunity of being alone. Methought, I wanted to indulge, at leisure, my own thoughts; though, I can assure you, they were none of the most agreeable. My spirits have been strangely oppressed, and, notwithstanding my endeavouring to join in the discourse, I have been every moment at church, repeating after the parson, and thinking, what a silly awkward figure I shall make there to-morrow. Bless me! what a coward am I grown! I shall certainly behave like a natural. O never mind it, reply'd I, with a malicious pleasure, at finding her as weak as myself; depend upon it, I shall keep you in countenance. I am so terrified, at the solemnity of the ceremony, that I heartily wish it was over.

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ver. I dread it as something mighty formidable, and can hardly think of it without trembling. But suppose now, added I, we should take the pains to read it over together. Agreed, reply'd she, running into my closet, and returning immediately with my prayer-book: come, let us begin, added she, it will be more familiar to us to-morrow. Here we began, making our remarks as we proceeded. In short, we read over the whole ceremonial, with the utmost attention; which, as we lengthened it out, with abundance of comments, and little disputes upon some particulars, which we did not understand, took up a considerable time.

HAVING now gratified our curiosity, we wished each other a good night, and Amelia left me; but she was hardly out of my room, when returning with a smile on her countenance, I am come, said she, to ask your consent to let me lie with you. I am persuaded, that we are neither of us in a disposition to give way to sleep. The hours would pass on, very heavily, were we alone; let us, then, divert ourselves as agreeably as we can. With all my heart, my dear, said I, extremely pleas'd with her proposal: we will indulge our reflections, with the greatest freedom.

UPON

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UPON this, we undress'd, and went to bed.
 —But I will not trouble your ladyship, with
 the various topics of our discourse; it is suffi-
 cient to say, that we talked till morning,
 when, shaking off the drowsiness, that then
 began insensibly to steal upon us, we arose;
 but had hardly finished the agreeable task of
 dressing each other, when somebody, rapping
 softly at the door, Amelia opened it, and our
 two lovers appeared. They saluted us, with
 an air of transport, telling us, that, as they
 had seen us at the window, they could not
 forbear coming to wish us joy, on the arrival
 of this happy morning. This, my dear, said
 Lucius, is the day, from whence I shall date
 the completion of my happiness; a day, that,
 I hope, we shall neither of us ever think of
 without delight. O my Felicia! how happy
 are you going to make me! Here he gently
 press'd my hand, and gave me a look so ex-
 tremely tender, that I could not help banish-
 ing every impertinent thought, to share in his
 transport; I even returned the charming pres-
 sure, and squeez'd his hand, with a freedom
 I had never indulged before. Sure, said I,
 this must be a happy union, where both so
 ardently wish to promote each others felicity!
 O my dear! cry'd he, in an extasy, how

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shall I merit this sweet excess of goodness !

MELLIFONT, I suppose, was entertaining Amelia, in the same passionate strain ; but I was not at leisure to attend, either to their words, or behaviour : however, I remember that they both looked extremely pleased. We went down to breakfast, when Mr Manly, and my father, join'd, with my aunt, in the most affectionate wishes, for the continuance of our happiness ; at the same time, letting us know, that a coach was ready to carry us, as soon as we had drank our chocolate, to a small village, at a few miles distance, where a clergyman waited to join our hands.

AT the mention of the coach and clergyman, my uneasiness return'd. I trembled, as if afraid of the awful ceremony ; while Mellifont, drawing the common prayer out of his pocket, which he had found in my room, and taken up unobserved, increased my disorder, by shewing my father, in what place he found it open upon the table. This was a circumstance, which created a great deal of mirth amongst the old people ; who, however, unanimously agreed, that we could not have spent our time better, than in thus studying the nature of those engagements, we were going to enter into ; to which my aunt added,

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ded, Indeed, I think my niece, and my daughter, ought to be commended, instead of being laugh'd at; for, as marriage is one of the most important steps we can take in life, since our happiness, both in this, and a future state, in a great measure, depends upon it; they could not, at this time, have employed their thoughts, on a more interesting subject, than the solemn promises, by which they are going to bind themselves.

SEVERAL other things were said upon the same subject, which took up good part of the time we were at breakfast; and we were just ready to step into the coach, when Mellifont, to my no small satisfaction, proposed our sending for the clergyman to perform the ceremony here. Lucius, casting a glance at me, to see if I approved the motion, immediately seconded his friend, and, tho' my aunt disapproved of it, as a thing unc customary in this part of the country, we had the happiness to carry it against her, by my father's joining on our side. We, therefore, took our seats again, and one of the coaches was sent away for the reverend gentleman.

I shall not attempt, my dear friend, to repeat the chat that filled up this interval. I was in a very odd situation; but in less than

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two hours time, we were informed that the coach was return'd, and, soon after, saw the divine enter the room, accompanied by Sophronia and Marilla, who had waited for us at church. The glass having gone once round, we arose, and went into a back parlour, facing the garden; I, trembling with fear, held by my father's arm, and Amelia by my aunt's; when, cushions being brought in, the solemn service began.—But it would be impertinent for me, minutely, to describe my behaviour on this occasion, which, however, was not altogether so ridiculous as I expected; only this I must say, that I repeated the words, *honour and obey*, as distinctly as the rest: nor did Amelia, any more than I, scruple to pronounce those formidable sounds. My heart readily assented to every thing: my whole soul was lost in devotion, and every faculty of it employed in the service.

You find, Madam, I am now entered into the venerable state of wedlock; but, whatever change I have undergone in my manner of life, I do myself the honour to assure you, that I was never more, than I am at present,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S
sincere friend,
FELICIA MANLY.
LET-

LETTER XXVI.

DEAR MADAM,

YOUR congratulations on our marriage, are so very obliging, that I can't defer my acknowledgments, without deserving the imputation of ingratitude, a crime that my soul most abhors; and, therefore, as I am as sensible, as possible, of your goodness, I embrace this first opportunity of telling you so. O my friend! what a sweet addition do your praises give, to the secret applause, with which I regard my happy choice! Lucius is, indeed, worthy of all you have said in his favour; his mind is truly noble, and all his soul as much the object of my admiration, as my love.

In my last, Madam, I broke off a little abruptly, at the conclusion of that solemn ceremony, which initiated me into a different class of mortals: but, as I have several things to relate, which, I flatter myself, may serve to amuse and entertain you, I will now resume the thread of my story.

WHEN all was over, my heart, which had hitherto been extremely oppressed, began to beat more freely. Lucius embraced me, and, with eyes fill'd with a melting softness, cry'd,
Now,

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Now, my dear, I may be so happy as to call you my wife. Dear name! may you never think of it, without pleasure! The rest of the company embraced us in their turn; and paid us the grateful compliments, which burst from hearts, struggling under an excess of affection, and tender joy. Nor did Lucius's father, who had given away Amelia, appear less affected with our common happiness, than mine. In short, every face glow'd with satisfaction, while they strove to outdo each other, in their caresses and testimonies of regard.

WE now adjourned to another room, where a side-board was set with wines and fruit, when my aunt insisted upon my drinking a glass to raise my spirits, which Amelia, after my example, complied with. The clergyman, who is one of the most facetious gentlemen upon earth, told us abundance of agreeable stories, with so much humour, that he, frequently, set the whole company in a laugh; nor could Amelia, and I, forbear joining in the general mirth. We insensibly returned to ourselves, and, before dinner, were able to bear a part in the conversation. The reverend divine filled his pipe, had a tankard of old october to himself, and, by his wit and good temper, let us see, that he did not think an innocent mirth,

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mirth, at all inconsistent with the strictest piety. And it is worthy of observation, that, notwithstanding the extraordinary gaiety of the gentlemen, not the least word escaped them, on this occasion, that could offend the chaste-est ear. Lucius and Mellifont were in high spirits; but our fathers appeared transported above themselves; they had a peculiar satisfaction in their looks, while every gesture, and every glance, expressed the glad heart of a fond parent. But these are things, too delicate to be described. Sophronia and my aunt had much the same elevated joy, which, whenever they endeavoured to express it, seemed too big for utterance. What a delightful circumstance, to think that our happiness is diffused, in so charming a manner, to those who are most dear to us!

DINNER being over, and the servants ordered to withdraw, my father presented Lucius, with the writings belonging to the greater part of his estate. As I have given you the person of my daughter, and intrusted her future felicity in your hands, said he, with an air of open confidence, I make no scruple of giving you the unlimited possession of what is less dear to me. It would be an injury to you, my son, (for now I may have the pleasure of calling

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calling you by this affectionate name) and shew me too little moved by your noble and generous sentiments, should I make you depend on my daughter, for the enjoyment of any of the elegancies of life. I, therefore, with the greatest satisfaction, rely on your virtue and prudence, to manage the estate, which, as the husband of my Felicia, you have a right to partake of, in such a manner, as to promote your mutual happiness. Dear Sir, said Lucius, interrupting him, you are pleased to oppress me with your goodness; but, while I would express my grateful acknowledgements, I must beg you not to streighten yourself, to add— No, no, interrupted my father, in his turn, you need not give yourself any pain on my account. I have reserved, to myself, an easy competence, sufficient to support the character I have always borne in life, and to supply all the exigencies, incident to the decline of it. A parent, in my opinion, added he smiling, should never be so profuse of his wealth, as to deprive himself of the capacity of living as he pleases without the assistance of his children; and, indeed, none, that deserve this indulgence, can be pleased with seeing such a preposterous, such an unnatural dependence. I consider you both as my children, your interests are now
become

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become inseparable; and, therefore, I have made no reserve for my daughter: the convincing proofs I have received, of the greatness of your mind, make all such precautions unnecessary. Nor will Felicia, I am persuaded, be displeased that I have given all to you. Why so, sir, interposed I? do you really think it no mortification, to refuse me the pleasure of doing justice to Mr Manly's merit, by giving him so considerable a proof of my regard, as it would be, to make him a present of a fine jointure, as soon as I had it in my possession? How many agreeable things might I have heard him say to me, on this occasion! But, seriously, added I, I am altogether as well pleased as it is; and I assure you, you could not have given me greater pleasure, than you have now done.

THE unexpected vivacity of this reply caused a general smile; Lucius bowed his head, and seemed particularly pleased with it; indeed he had reason to be so. His looks shewed that he was charmed with my father's behaviour; for, tho' he had been sensible, that he really gained nothing, by this instance of his confidence, in his integrity and affection to me; yet, as it was an agreeable proof, of the great share he had of his esteem, it could not fail of giving him the highest satisfaction. We now joined

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in the warmest expressions of gratitude to this indulgent parent ; whilst I, much less embarrassed on this occasion, than this dear man, endeavoured to find terms, capable of expressing, in some measure, the fulness of his heart.

My father put an end to our acknowledgments, by turning to my father-in-law, and making him a present, answerable to the goodness of his own disposition. It was a little estate of about two hundred a year, which is to return to us, after his and Sophronia's decease, and which they did not receive, without thanking him, with tears of gratitude ; but in the moment, when they seemed labouring under a surprise, which struck them dumb, and rendered them incapable of expressing themselves, Mellifont, who had left us a few minutes before, return'd, and, desiring to know if we had done with business, introduced a band of music ; and, by this means, prevented those affecting acknowledgments, which, however agreeable, are always attended with some pain. The day was spent in innocent gayety and mirth, and with that peculiar satisfaction, which the happy occasion was adapted to inspire, among the most intimate and cordial friends.

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 19

THE next morning, while we were at breakfast, my aunt told us, that she expected a visit from some of the neighbouring gentlemen and ladies, to congratulate us on this happy union. Some of them, added she laughing, as they affect to appear men of wit, will, I don't doubt, be fond of displaying it in a manner, that will not be very agreeable to the modesty of, either, my niece, or daughter; and, therefore, to save their blushes for the present, suppose they should take an airing till dinner. I was just going to make the same proposal, said my father, tho' from a different reason. The day is exceeding fine, and I should be glad of the pleasure of Mr Manly's company, without the fear of having our conversation interrupted. Lucius thanked him for the honour he did him, and the coach being soon ready, we stepped in, leaving Mellifont with Amelia. who promised to follow us; we having, before, let them know the road we proposed to take. My father began the conversation, by the most tender expressions of his affection. My dear Felicia, said he, how great is my joy, to see you so happy! You are married to a man of sense and probity, to a man, whom I shall love as a son, and esteem as a worthy friend. I wish you could

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could both know, how happy a father you have made me. Dear Sir, said Lucius, I have not words to express the least part of that gratitude, I feel for your goodness. Your happiness, as it arises from ours, ought to encrease it too. I love you, as the tender father who gave me being. You are more than a father, you give me happiness. Here he took hold of my hand, and then looking again at my father; O, Sir, continued he, with a full heart, let me thank you for this, the dearest of all your gifts!

You are very welcome, reply'd my father, with a smile, I hope my daughter will prove herself worthy of such a husband. May God bless you both. You are now entered into a new scene of life, the very different cares, the different duties of which, require the exercise of very different abilities. My dear Lucius, I approve your humanity, that benevolence, which will naturally prompt you, to pity and relieve the distress'd; but, even this affection, amiable as it is, is one of the most dangerous of all that the mind of man is sensible to. There are faults, which arise, even from goodness of heart, faults attended with worse consequences, than those of cruelty and brutal ill-nature. Pity has ruined thousands, men, of the
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most refined sense, and of the greatest abilities; and, when these are ruined, the ignorant and the ill-natured, proud of an opportunity of revenging the superiority of their acquired endowments, are sure to treat them with double contempt. And, indeed, men of great humanity, though of the best sense, frequently err in the plainest cases; even, where one, but a degree above a natural, would not be deceiv'd. This appears strange, yet it is an observation, confirmed by daily experience. These are, frequently, not only the worst oeconomists; but they are drawn into the weakest and most childish engagements, where inevitable ruin is almost the natural consequence. Yet the reason of this is, perhaps, not hard to discover. Those persons, whose thoughts are taken up with refined speculations, commonly know but little of the world; they may be versed, indeed, in prudential maxims; but there will always be a vast difference, between these, and truths founded on experience. A man, of an open benevolent disposition, while conscious of the integrity of his own heart, is less inclined to suspicion, than others of more contracted views: he loves to think well of mankind, and frequently thinks better of individuals than they deserve.

But,

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But, when pity has taken possession of the heart; pity, a passion so nearly allied to love, that, like it, it banishes from the mind every injurious idea, it is almost incapable of suspicion; it reflects not on possible consequences; or, if these do arise in the mind, they pass away unregarded, and make too slight an impression, to prove effectual. The man of humanity finds it much easier to act from passion, than from reason; he is press'd forwards, by the impulse of a lively imagination, filled with the advantages that will attend the distressed person, on his compliance with his desires: and, therefore, when he is solicited from without, and, at the same time, prompted from within, by the impulses of a generous and affected heart, there is no wonder if he finds a difficulty in saying *no*. There are circumstances, in which a young man will find it extremely hard, to pronounce this little monosyllable; and, in order to do it, when necessary, he will be obliged to practise a great deal of self-denial: but it is a mortification sometimes absolutely necessary. We have a kind of proverb, which advises us “to think all men rogues, till we find them honest.”

LUCIUS sate, all this while, with his eyes fixed on my father, in the utmost attention; but,

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but, being now unable to contain himself any longer, he cry'd out, I dare say, Sir, the first person, who made use of this proverb, was a dishonest man himself. What a life of suspicion, and distrust ! Can he be a friend to mankind ? Can he have any complacency in his fellow-creatures, who looks upon them as a nest of vipers, as villains, who only wait for an opportunity to rob, or impose upon him ?——

No, cry'd my father, interrupting him in his turn ; I did not mention this proverb, by way of approbation, as you would soon have found, had you suffered me to proceed. For, though it is a sure way to prevent being imposed upon, yet it is unjust, and, consequently, criminal. It is a much more christian disposition, at least, to believe every man honest, till we have reason to think him a villain : but, nevertheless, if we know the world, we shall see the necessity of using every proper precaution to secure ourselves.

Your benevolence, I allow, ought to shew itself, in real acts of kindness ; but it should be in such acts, as reason and prudence will warrant ; a beneficence, generous and diffusive, and, at the same time, consistent with prudence, and the rules of a just oeconomy.

Let

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Let me persuade you, to be cautious of signing your name : learn, boldly, to refuse, what would be improper for you to grant ; and, having once refused, let no importunity prevail upon you, to act contrary to your judgment. Never let your steward's accounts pass unexamined, nor ever suffer him to distress a tenant, without seeing the poor man himself.

HERE my father paused ; when Lucius, thanking him for his advice, and the other coach, with Mellifont and Amelia, driving up to the side of ours, the conversation turned on indifferent subjects. It is now time to conclude this long letter. But, I must first do myself the honour to assure your ladyship, that nothing, but the pleasure of your company, can add to the felicity of

your most affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 25

LETTER XXVII.

DEAR MADAM,

IN my last, if I am not mistaken, I told you, that my aunt proposed our taking an airing before dinner, to avoid the impertinence of some country gentlemen, whom, it seems, she had reason to expect; as they had, early in the morning, sent her word, that they would do themselves the honour of paying her a visit, to congratulate Amelia, and me, on our happiness. Their persons, tho' not their characters, were unknown to me; and tho' Amelia and her mother had seen them before, yet, as they had no acquaintance in the family, we all look'd upon this as an unwelcome intrusion; which, on account of their birth, and fortune, we were obliged to overlook; and they, doubtless, imagined us very much honour'd by a visit, which we would very gladly have dispensed with. For my part, the very idea, of being obliged to bear with their impertinence, gave a damp to my satisfaction; and, upon my return, I could not help wishing, very heartily, that my aunt might be mistaken; a wish that I the more readily indulged, as I did not then know her reason for

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expecting them. But this was both vain and fruitless : for, at some distance, we could observe a number of spruce servants, in very rich liveries ; and, upon our entering the court, our ears were saluted, or, rather, stunn'd, with a confus'd noise, which issued from the window of a room adjoining to the hall. One was singing with a loud, harsh, and disagreeable voice ; while two or three others, all talking at the same time, were engaged in a warm dispute, each seeming desirous to gain a victory, rather by the strength of his lungs, than of his arguments, and to struggle to out-vie the rest in noise. What a jargon was here ! Had our ears been entertain'd with the disinal thrum of the bladder and string, or, had we been welcom'd home, by a concert of catcalls, I could not have formed an idea of a more disgusting entertainment, than I now expected to receive, from the company of these country 'squires.

My father frown'd, and Lucius seem'd heartily vex'd ; but neither of them spoke a word. However, the coach no sooner drove up to the door, than the revel rout ceas'd : and the coach-door being open'd, Lucius leap'd out, and, presenting his hand, help'd me to alight, in spite of half a dozen young rakes, who rudely endeavour'd to push before him ; and

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all of whom seemed desirous of doing me this honour. I was next obliged to suffer a disagreeable salute from each, which the last, being already half drunk, render'd, if possible, more distasteful, by belching in my face: but it was a ceremony I was forced to submit to, and good manners made me disguise my reluctance: while my father, being entirely unknown, stood by, with Lucius, and my aunt, with the appearance of unconcern'd spectators.

THIS being perform'd, with as ill a grace as possible, and a wretched compliment bestow'd upon me from each, they all ran, with the same familiar air, to the other coach; and Mellifont, having set his foot on the ground, to my no small surprize, was surrounded by two or three of the most forward, one of which, shaking him by the hand, cried, Damn ye, ye strong back'd dog, I wish you joy. Nor were the compliments of the others much more polite; they wonder'd where the devil he had been, but could never dream, that he had been poaching. Amelia having, after my example, gone thro' the nauseous ceremonial, we all went in together; but as we were passing thro' the hall, I observed one of the most disagreeable wretches I ever beheld, a tall, lean, raw, lank, ugly fellow, with a long face,

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and hollow eyes, dress'd in a green frock and faced waistcoat, who, swinging his arms, ran to Mellifont, and, giving him a lusty blow on the shoulder, and at the same time seizing fast hold of a button, cry'd, "Is that grave son of a bitch he?" nodding at Lucius; and then added, Zoons! I have a good mind to make him a cuckold.—Damn me if I have not. Tho' he spoke pretty low, Lucius overheard him; and, letting go my hand, stept up to him, and immediately seizing hold of his nose, which was none of the shortest, led him to me, and insisted upon his asking my pardon, which he did, without hesitation; whilst I, trembling with fear, readily gave him absolution; when, bestowing a hearty curse upon Lucius, and writhing his face, into several ugly contortions, I suppose to bring his nose into due form, he turn'd, with a silly grin, to his companions, and, with a sheepish air of affected pleasantry, endeavoured to laugh it off as a joke; tho' he said it was a cursed queer joke, and he hardly knew whether it was in jest, or earnest.

You can hardly conceive, Madam, the terror I was in; for I immediately dreaded, that the resentment of all his companions would fall upon Lucius, whom I, therefore, apprehended

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hended to be in danger : but I was in a moment relieved from my fears ; for, to my no small surprize and satisfaction, they all set up a loud laugh, and, clapping their hands, caper'd about the hall with an air of triumphant satisfaction ; and my father, who had, at first, put his hand to his sword, drew it back with a smile.

NOTHING now was heard but applauses on Lucius, who was regarded as a hero, and the repetition of I—, I—, I—, from two or three running about, and mimicking the look, gesture, and snuffle of their companion, while Lucius led him by the nose ; a kind of wit, which, as it was perfectly agreeable to their talents, seem'd to give them the highest delight.

As soon as they were conducted to another room, we stepp'd into the parlour, which they had left upon our return home, the floor of which was pretty well strew'd with broken glasses ; when my father observ'd to Lucius, that, if these were his friend's companions, he could not help forming a very bad opinion, both of his taste and morals. Whether Lucius would have vindicated Mellifont, or not, I can't tell ; for my father had no sooner made this remark, than he himself enter'd the room, and, advancing to Amelia, who had stay'd with

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us, I have left, said he, this stupid rabble of baronets and 'squires to themselves; a parcel of familiar puppies! who, because I had, some time ago, the misfortune to blunder into their company, must pretend to rank me in the number of their acquaintance, and, as such, to pay me this visit. Pray, who are they? what are they? cry'd my father, with a peevish hastiness, that strongly express'd his dislike. They are, Sir, said he, gentlemen of different dispositions, united together, only, by a common taste for a favourite diversion. Some of them are fond of the cockpit; others are fox-hunters; but all of them keep running horses: and, positively, by the rusticity of their behaviour, one would imagine that they had their education in the stable: and, indeed, for ought I know, the groom may be the better gentleman. But, as they have most of them very considerable estates, they imagine, that they have a license, to trouble whom they please with their impertinence. The ladies, I expect, will have a terrible entertainment at dinner. I am afraid so, said Amelia, and I heartily wish them gone. If we could but shut our ears, as easily as our eyes, cry'd I, I should esteem it now an happiness. Gentlemen, 'squires, baronets! said my father, with a sneer,

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a sneer; fools, blockheads, ignorant stupid rascals! they know no higher satisfaction than a horse-laugh. Well, well, return'd Mellifont, very gravely, but you must not form an idea of our country gentlemen from these; many of whom would be ashamed of being seen in their company, as I assure you, I am. There are, amongst us, men of sense, agreeable companions, and, here and there, is scattered a man of humanity.

THIS conversation was interrupted, by our being informed, that dinner was ready; on which we went to the dining room, and, after our making an apology for our absence, took our seats at the table.

HORSES were the subject we found them upon, when we enter'd the room; and this topic lasted, all the time we were at dinner. Nay, so strictly did they adhere to it, that their very jests had a smack of the groom, mingled with an indecency the most shocking and distasteful, and too coarse and indelicate, even to deserve the name of a double entendre. Amelia and I were toasted under the name of pretty fillies, which no sooner went round, than one drank health to the riders, and this produced a loud laugh of applause; and, in the course of going round, pick'd up an addi-

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tional piece of obscenity from every one of these gentlemen, who, emulous of exceeding in this way, constantly produced a fresh laugh, and a stare in our faces. Amelia and I were in a situation worthy of pity; we blush'd, hung down our heads, and, I speak for myself, I was ready to sink with shame. At last somebody ask'd Lucius if I was a good pacer. Ay, damm'e, and needs neither whip nor spur, cried another. All eyes were again fix'd on me; and thus the suppos'd wit was bandied about, collecting fresh mire from every kick. But whenever the man, who had given us the affront in the hall, began to speak; for he seem'd very desirous of adding his quota; Mellifont stopp'd him short, by snuffing out I—, I—I—, and giving him a hint, that if he had not yet enough, he would lead him another turn. This kept him silent, and afforded us some small relief.

At last something was said, which I had the happiness not to understand; it was address'd to Mellifont, and was something about jumping—no, leaping, was the word; but, it seems, it was very gross: for Lucius, who had several times before began to speak, but was interrupted and borne down, by some stupid ribaldry, seem'd now resolved to break thro'

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all opposition ; and, therefore, raising his voice louder than common, Pray, gentlemen, said he, what have these ladies done, that they should be shocked with such poor, wretched obscenity ? Is there any merit in putting a lady to the blush ?—It is cowardly, mean, and scandalous ; below the dignity of a gentleman.—A gentleman ! did I say ?—below the dignity of a man.—Cowardly ! cry'd one of the most forward, interrupting him with a haughty air, and frowning stedly look ; pray who do you call coward ? Faith, I won't be led by the nose.—Yes, cowardly, cry'd Lucius, raising his voice still higher, and speaking with equal sternness,—ay, cowardly.—Cowardly, echo'd my father, and Mellifont, at the same time. I repeat it again, continued Lucius, with a firmness and resolution that charm'd me, it is cowardly, an insult on decency : it is affronting the ladies in the tenderest part ; and, however authorised by brutal custom, on these occasions, it is an insult on nature—the most barbarous insult, thus to discolour the cheek of conscious innocence.—Pox ! cry'd a youth of about eighteen, who seem'd, by his ignorance and his dialect, never to have been twenty miles from home ; he want let us be witty. I'll be curst, if ever I was so witty in aw my

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life. The women should no' be sheamfac'd, it is time that was o'er, or the devil's in't. I ha' said more behauf before my own mother at wom, and shu loff'd as thof shu would ha' be——Witty! cry'd my father, interrupting him with a sneer; let us see that you have common sense, young man, before your affect to be witty. Common sense! said Mellifont, with a satirical laugh, Common sense is a lady, that very few here are acquainted with, I can tell you that: why, common sense is no common woman; and, therefore, she is as much shunn'd, by these, as a common woman by a man, who has any sense at all.—And, as to my lady Decency, they don't even know her, when they see her. If they did, it might be possible to make them blush. Mellifont had laid down his knife and fork at the beginning of this speech, and now, leaning back in his chair, and holding up his hands in a supplicating posture, he immediately added, with an arch look, that had a mixture of the serious and comical,

“Hail, Decency! celestial maid!”

“Descend from heav'n to Beauty's aid,”

And blast the wretch that's not afraid

To affront thee.

THE humorous manner of his introducing the

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the two first lines from Swift, and his adding the last, without the least hesitation, gave us an agreeable surprise, and made my father and Lucius smile, for the first time, since they had been at table. And, indeed, their obstinately refusing to drink all the toasts, proposed by these rakes, and their vindicating our refusal, had kept them in a constant squabble, whilst Mellifont was sure to regulate himself according to their motions. These gentlemen, intimidated, affronted, or, struck with some sense of shame, continued pretty silent for some time; and then, resuming their favourite subject of race-horses, to our no small satisfaction, drank to each other, and let us alone.

AT last this hateful meal was over; and, I protest, I would not go thro' the same mortifications, for any consideration. My mind was then in a very tender situation, easily shock'd, and extremely susceptible of pain. How barbarous, how cruel, how inhuman, then, was it, thus to blast the joy of innocence! rudely to tear the veil, that hides those rites, that modest decency would conceal; but which, neither God, nor reason, condemn! with brutal insolence to trample on the snowy robes of bashful chastity! How impudent to stare us

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into confusion, and to add a triumph to the affront, by a ridiculous laugh ! I am shock'd at the recollection of this scene ; and, therefore, must conclude, with assuring you, that I am

YOUR LADYSHIP'S most sincere,

and affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXVIII.

AFTER so long a silence, Madam, you may justly wonder, that I have the assurance to confess that I am still alive : but however ashamed I am of my negligence, I have neither the complaisance, nor the resolution, to leave the world out of a punctilio of good-breeding, especially as I am in perfect health, and so happy in my present situation, that I can, without the least pain, think of deferring, for many years, a visit to the heavenly regions. You tell me I have lost, in the wife, the affection I owe to the friend, and I will not deny your having, in appearance, some reason for this heavy charge ; but as I hate apologies, I will not take the trouble to justify myself, tho' I would have you think my negligence owing to the different turn of my affairs,

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fairs, to my indolence, stupidity, or whatever else you please, rather than to a want of that affection, which I shall ever feel for you.

THREE months ago, I gave you an account of our marriage; and I have now to add, that, in order to put an end to those ceremonious visits, which at last began to grow extremely fatiguing, we found ourselves under a necessity of leaving my aunts, sooner than we had intended: Mr Manly, therefore, bought an estate at some miles distance, with a mansion house, which, by his direction, was repaired and furnished with all possible diligence. We removed hither, about two months after I sent you my last, and, at the same time, Mellifont carried his bride to his own estate. We frequently see each other, and enjoy all that satisfaction from these visits, which the most intimate friendship can afford us. Not the least reserve subsists between us: a perfect sympathy, in each others happiness, makes us such strangers to ceremony, that we have nothing to do, but to consult our own inclinations, to render us agreeable to each other. Our house is a very neat building, yet so plain a one, that it would be trifling too much with your patience, to give a description of it. The situation is indeed charming, being surrounded with woods
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and groves, which on the one side must, in the summer season, appear extremely delightful, as the other does so now, tho' in the midst of frost and snow. *There* will be the triumph of nature; *here* is the boast of art. *There* that uncultivated wildness, which pleases without method, and without design, charming most where the easy confusion, and agreeable disorder, render art superfluous, and labour vain: *here* all the ornaments that art, in despite of nature, can bestow.

IN the front is a tall and stately wood, composed of oaks, venerable with age, with no other opening; but a large area, and a vista, which carries the eye from the center of the building to a considerable distance. Here the intermingled branches must, I fancy, in the summer season, cast a shade, varied with all the degrees of light, from the bright sun-beam, glittering through the boughs, to the dusky gloom of sober twilight.

BEHIND the main building is a garden, of a considerable extent; which, even in this season of the year, has its beauties. To take no notice of the parterre, which lies next the house; the hedges, which are on each side the principal walks, are formed of ever-greens, resembling walls, adorned, at proper distances, with

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with pilasters, which, with eternal verdure, branch into all the decorations of architecture. In the midst of each walk, along an opening, on either hand, the eye is carried through a number of triumphal arches, composed of the same leafy materials, and which, leading to the extremity of the garden, are bounded by several fine alcoves, the paintings of which, tho' injured by time, have a very agreeable effect. In some of the squares, composed by these walks, are fish-ponds, in others, groves of fruit trees, and in others, knots of flowers of various forms, which, in the season for these fragrant ornaments, must, I fancy, be vastly delightful. In the middle of the garden, where all the principal avenues meet, upon a pretty high ascent, is a summer house, the windows of which, as well as the walls, are so covered with ever-greens, that the faint obstructed light spreads a gloom perfectly soothing; while the clusters of shining berries, half covered with snow, hanging against the glass, with frosted leaves of intermingled silver and green, seem to give the lye to the season, and to join in one view Christmas and Autumn. At the entrance is a guard of giants, with their massy clubs resting on the ground; harmless monsters! that I can view
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without the least trembling. 'Tis true, they themselves appear in some disorder, for want of pruning : their heads and bodies are covered with a number of luxuriant branches, and, even their fingers are grown, near half a yard, beyond the just proportion, that ought to be allowed them.

AUTUMN was far spent, before Lucius and I, attended by my father, went to take a view of our new habitation. I fancied myself in fairy land, and could not help expressing my surprize, that while the winds, on one side the house, scattered, in wavy curls, the russet leaves, which, with every blast, fell from the half naked groves ; on the other, they were cloathed with lively verdure, and still appeared smiling in their gayest liveries.

'Tis true, there is something disagreeably formal, in the studied regularity that reigns here : statues, obelisks, and triumphal arches, are but aukwardly mimicked in box and yeugh : but still they find work for some labouring hands, who might otherwise want the means of subsistence ; and, for this reason, Lucius may possibly continue them in their present situation, with only a few alterations, in order to render the whole more easy, free, and natural. Besides, as the house and gardens are in the midst of a
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wood, this spot, even in the summer season, will agreeably set off the wildness of the prospect, and, by a pleasing contrast, heighten the variegated scene.

IN this peaceful retirement, Madam, we enjoy a tranquillity unknown to courts. Our passions, which, before this union, were high-raised, and too tenderly ardent to be unmingled with pain, now gently soothed, sink into a delightful repose. The diffidence, the flutter of heart is gone, and exchanged for the calmer sweets of an endearing friendship. We have now the satisfaction of passing our time in the proper employment of reasonable and immortal beings. No wayward humours interrupt our peace; no little jars fret the tender cord of sweet content and mutual complacency, which, when once broken, is so difficult to join again.

RELIGION, which to others, is a source of the most gloomy reflections, is to us an inexhaustible spring of rational and sublime delight. We daily address the supreme and sovereign good, as our father, our friend, and benefactor; we admire the wisdom, the wonderful skill that shines in all his works: we adore his goodness, and pour forth our gratitude in humble praise: what transport can
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equal that of gratitude ! what delight be comparable, to that of a thankful heart ! If you call this enthusiasm, it is, at least, an enthusiasm, the most noble and refined, justified by the coolest dictates of reason, and necessary to render human happiness complete.

OUR minds have hitherto been calm and unruffled. My sister Marilla is my constant companion ; I have prevailed with her to stay with us a fortnight, and we spend a part of the day together, either in reading in the summer house, which Lucius has furnished with the most valuable ornament, a fine collection of books ; or in paying, or receiving, visits, among a few select friends. Hither we sometimes all three repair; and with intermingled chat and reading, find subjects ever new and entertaining. Great part of my time is taken up with the management of my family, or in working at my needle. Your ladyship sees what a domestic animal I am grown ; but while these amusements give an alacrity to my spirits, by diversifying my satisfactions, I shall have the greatest reason to be pleased with them ; for, though you smile at the meanness of my taste, I find a real happiness arising, even from these low employments, since they not only preserve peace and order in the
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family, but give a greater relish to the superior pleasures of which I am sensible, when, unbending my mind, I enjoy the conversation of my friends. As to the vapours, Madam, it is so long since I have felt these morbid disorders, that I scarcely know what they mean; so that not the rosy milkmaid, happy in her humble obscurity, that sings, or laughs, from morn till evening, can be less troubled with the spleen than I.

I HAVE nothing more to add, but that

I am, Yours, &c.

FELICIA MANDY.

LETTER XXIX.

DEAR MADAM,

THOUGH it is impossible I should receive an answer to my last, you having yet scarcely read it, I write now to let you see that I can commit, upon occasion, an act of supererogation. Add this to my former neglect, and try if it wont, in some measure, make the balance even.

Two or three days after our arrival here, my father returned to London. We were now pretty well settled; for those workmen, who

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who had been employed in making the necessary repairs, being discharged, every thing was soon reduced into proper order. Mellifont, Amelia, and my sister Marilla, were present, when my father, in the most tender manner, took his leave. We had all resolved to accompany him some miles on the road ; but he positively refused to suffer it, alledging, that this would only prolong the uneasiness of parting : we were, therefore, obliged to submit, and he being mounted on horseback, (for he had before made us a present of his coach) attended by a servant, was soon out of sight. We returned into the hall, and stood for some time, in a thoughtful posture, without speaking a word ; when at last Mellifont, assuming an air of cheerfulness, cry'd out, Come, come, what do we stand here for ? We must divert this pensive humour ; suppose we take a turn in the garden. This motion was immediately comply'd with, and the uneasy gloom insensibly dispersed ; but the weather being pretty sharp, I ordered a fire to be made in the summer house, to which we retired. Having taken our places, Marilla said with a smile, I was one day last week to visit Miss Powers, an elderly maiden lady of great prudence, and the daughter of a deceased clergyman ; who, tho' she

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she has but a small fortune, finds the means, by help of the greatest oeconomy, to make a pretty genteel appearance. When I knocked at the door, I was told she was not at home ; but as she was expected every moment, I was desired to walk in, and, indeed, I had hardly sat down when she entered the room, with her hands covered with dirt, and one of them stained with blood. I arose, and, with a good deal of concern, enquired what was the matter. O nothing, cry'd she. I have fallen down ; but I have only hurt my hand, it was a mercy I did not daub my new gown. It was impossible for me, to forbear smiling at this answer ; I desired she would explain herself, and asked her, if she thought the Almighty could be supposed to concern himself in an affair of such a trifling moment, as a few yards of silk, which, though it had been soiled, would still answer all the ends of dress, though not of vanity. She was very much displeased at this answer, and, therefore, all the while she was cleaning herself, and preparing a plaister for her hand, warmly justified the propriety of the expression; alledging that nothing was too mean to fall under the inspection of the supreme governor of the world.

THIS short story gave rise to a very long
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conversation. Lucius began with observing, that particular circumstances will make some persons look upon an inconsiderable pain as a trifle, when compared to the loss of what can only serve to flatter the imagination, and the more so, in proportion to the difficulty of procuring these gratifications. This, said he, is a common case ; but if it be proper to call the preserving a gown unsullied, a mercy, or a favour from heaven, it must be equally so to make this a petition in prayer : yet, if a lady was to be overheard at her devotions, crying, Lord preserve my best gown and petticoat from stains and dirt, the absurdity would be so glaring, that nobody could avoid taking notice of it. One who has a competency, prays for wealth, another, that he may obtain the honour for which he is soliciting : but what is this, abstracted from the moral use of wealth and honour, which few seem to regard, more than praying for a new head-dress, or a new gown ? Or what are the petitions for the continuance of these, when none but themselves receive the least benefit from them, but praying that the gown, or the petticoat, may remain unsullied ? A gentleman, who has a coach and pair, is ambitious of being drawn by six horses, and, only with this view, solli-

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solicits for a place, to enable him to accomplish it: now, where is the difference between praying, that he may obtain this place, and praying, that, instead of a coach and two, he may ride in a coach and six? If a pretty milkmaid should pray for money to buy a new top-knot, would her petition be more ridiculous?

MEN are carried away by false appearances, and enamoured with the dazzling shew of some glittering trifle. Providence, they flatter themselves, is employed on their behalf, and the God of nature engaged, in procuring the empty, the pernicious bauble. The miser unjustly seizes the last remains of an unfortunate helpless family, exposes them to want and beggary, and adds the fruits of extortion to his useless store, and cries, with his hollow eyes lifted up to heaven, It is a mercy that he was not too late to save his money! Might not the less guilty debauchee go to the stews, and, with equal propriety, say, It is a mercy that he found his favourite girl at home? Yet what horrid profanation! Can any thing be more superstitious, more shocking and absurd? Unconscious of the final result of things, while heaven is affronted, they are delighted with the gratification of their favourite vices:

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but how vain, how delusive the joy ! They mistook, for happiness, what was really the cause of the sharpest anguish. The miser, as he carries home his gold, is robbed of all his dear, recovered treasure, while the debauchee is expiring with a loathsome disease.

BUT do you infer from this, brother, said Marilla, that the Deity is entirely unconcerned about the temporal happiness or misery of individuals ? For my part, I think this would be going a little too far.

LUCIUS paused a moment, and then said, he had hitherto only endeavoured to expose a false notion of providence, and that kind of superstition, which makes some men, who deem themselves the peculiar favourites of heaven, resolve events the most trivial, in comparison with the important concerns of human life, into signal blessings and deliverances. A man, of this turn, knows that gratitude is a duty, and affects to discharge it very minutely : but, never reflecting, that the superintending care of providence is exercised over a whole universe, and, with regard to him, only as a part of that whole ; his gratitude, which should be always warm and lively, lies dormant, till some circumstance of his own life, no matter how trifling in itself, provided it

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powerfully strikes his passions, calls it forth to exercise. He can then prove to you, how much above his neighbours he is the object of the divine favour, and how justly his pious acknowledgments render him so.

THEY then entered, more largely, into the consideration of a particular providence; and, as I have recited their observations hitherto, I think, I may as well endeavour to give you the substance of the rest. But, dear Madam, you must excuse me, if I fail in the performance. It is a task somewhat above my abilities, and, as I shall be forced to abridge a very long dispute, which met with various interruptions; I am sensible, it will want all those natural graces in the repetition, which gave life and spirit to the conversation.

MELLIFONT observed: As the world is a great machine, governed by fixed mechanical laws, it is most reasonable to suppose, that man, as a free agent, is entirely left to the free exercise of his natural abilities, and to all the consequences resulting from it: for it is absurd to imagine, that a being of infinite sagacity should form a world in so bungling a manner, as to make any interposition at all necessary afterwards; much more to suppose it so imperfect,

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fect, as to stand in need of continual botching and mending. A man makes a watch, by which I would illustrate my idea of this grand piece of mechanism; but this watch, though it may be perfect in its kind, yet, as it wants frequent winding up, and, especially, as it calls for repeated repairs, is a piece of workmanship unworthy the skill of an almighty artificer.

Excuse me, Mellifont, reply'd Lucius, you are going on with a supposition that will never be granted. I readily allow, that the stupendous fabric of this earth, and all the unnumbered worlds that fill the vast immensity of space, move, in their several orbits, by the most perfect laws: but, does it follow from hence, that the whole is only a grand piece of clockwork, which, being set a going, will move several thousand years, before it be run down? Gravitation, by which all bodies have a tendency to each other, according to the strictest enquiry, is one of those qualities, which do not essentially reside in matter, consequently it can be no part of the machine. Your watch then has not only lost its spring, but the pivots are dropp'd from every wheel, and the whole become a heap of confusion; nay the very wheels themselves have

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have lost their form, and the metal, of which they are composed, is crumbled into infinitely minute particles.

THIS gravitation, which evades the search of the most curious enquiries, can be resolved into nothing, but the immediate hand of omnipotence, which locks together the infinitely small particles of solids, impels and gives motion to the heavenly bodies, adds fresh fuel to the sun, and whirls round it this ponderous mass of earth and sea, in a constant rotation of days and seasons. Hence arises a general providence, which, presiding over all nature, gives fertility to the soil, raises the sap in vegetables, blossoms in the trees, and glows in every flower.

It is very apparent, that thunder and lightning, sunshine and rain, and, in some measure, the various degrees of heat and cold, are not under the same regulations, as the diurnal and annual changes; since some of them are so far from being periodical, that they have no relation to time and place; but are, with respect to us, absolutely uncertain and precarious. Yet, on some of these depend the subsistence, the support, and very being, of the whole animal and vegetable world.

HERE is another instance, and in this there

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is room for the exertion, both of a general and particular providence : an instance, which you, Sir, would have found some difficulty in reducing to a scheme, wholly mechanical. The earth is parched up with drought, the air is more and more rarified, and, consequently, by its tenuity, more unfit to raise to a due height, and support those mists from the sea and rivers, which are necessary to form the refreshing rain. Who is it that directs the clouds to thicken in the heavens, to fall in cool refreshing showers, and, before it be too late, at once to rejoice the earth, and bless mankind ? If this dry season lasted one month, why might it not have lasted two, six, or twelve, till man and beast had been quite destroy'd, and whole regions laid in ruins ? Again, the rain falls, the moist and spungy air still collects, and still pours in a settled stream, and there is greater reason to believe, that it will rain to morrow, than there was yesterday that it will rain to day ; and while it continues, the probability is still on the side of its longer continuance. Did not the parent of mankind interpose, the all-enlivening sun might for ever hide his chearing beams, and we might be curst with a cloudy sky, while joy would be for ever ban-

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nished, and seed time and harvest be no more.

IN these instances, we daily see the most convincing proofs of the friendly care of the universal parent. Hence, he blesses one nation, and depresses another; and, even in the same country, humbles and exalts whomsoever he pleases.

BUT to be more particular, is there the least shadow of a probability, if we may judge from analogy, that this stupendous being, who, with such infinite care and skill, preserves the material, the vegetable, the animal world, should be entirely regardless of the intellectual and moral? That the being, who knows the most secret springs that move the human heart, should not, upon occasion, influence these, and, by affecting an individual, give happiness to millions? That he should inspire with wisdom, or perplex and confound, so as best to answer the wise designs of his government? That the God of truth should, by diffusing a little light over a dark benighted mind, promote the cause of truth, and spread the influences of pure religion, a free enquiry, and liberty of conscience, thro' a whole nation? That the most benevolent being in the universe should grant the petiti-

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ons of the man, whose heart is prepared, by humble prayer, to receive the blessings he asks? That the friend of mankind, the most virtuous, the most amiable being, should look, with complacency, on virtue in distress, and relieve the pious supplicant, who confides in his goodness? That he should curb the pride of the successful villain, and shield the honest heart, from the fly attacks of the fraudulent knave? Is there any thing irrational in this? any thing beneath a God? If it be more noble to change the swelling anguish of distress, into the gladsome raptures of gratitude and joy, than to form the most curious machine; this must be an employment more worthy of a God, than to create a world of lifeless matter, or all the glories of what Milton calls the "golden pavement of heaven, or "the bright sea of jasper, or of liquid "pearl."

MELLIFONT looked very grave, and, for some time, continued silent, as if lost in thought, when seeming to recollect himself, Well, well, reply'd he, you may, for ought I know, be in the right. We giddy-headed fellows don't think so deeply. But, after all, yours is an opinion that, now I think of it, we may reasonably wish to be true. However

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 55

ver let us change the subject.—Thus, Madam, with indefatigable labour, have I blundered through this long conversation, and am now so heartily tired, that I am absolutely unable to add any thing more, than that I am,

most affectionately, yours,

FELICIA MANLY.

P. S. When I had finished the above letter, instead of sending it away immediately, as I at first intended, I resolved to shew it Lucius, and this delay retarded my sending it, till the end of the week. I have just now received an answer to my last; but with what surprise do I find myself so unmercifully treated, about one poor paragraph *, which, though you had disliked, your good nature might have made you overlook! I am really half angry; but you throw away so much wit and humour on my pious rant, as you are pleased to call it, that I am almost afraid and ashamed to confess it. However, I can't help being persuaded, that all this mirth is at the expence of your more sober judgment. But the bottom of my paper puts me in mind, that it is time to conclude this long postscript; I, therefore,

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refer

* Letter XXVIII, Page 41. We daily address the supreme, &c. from which passage Charlotte takes occasion to ridicule prayer.

56 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

refer you to my next for an answer, and, for the present, throw down my pen.

PAGE 45, *the last line but one, after would, the reader is desired to add,* I thought this argument so conclusive, that I was quite at a loss for a reply, and, therefore, introduced a different subject. But I have since recollected an observation of yours, brother, that, among superficial thinkers, it is no uncommon thing to find an injudicious application of the most important truths, when it is made to support their own weak prejudices, to cases in themselves of no importance.

L E T T E R X X X .

DEAR MADAM,

I SHALL take no notice of the ridiculous light, in which you place my manner of life. Your representing me as a recluse, and the companion of the young druid Lucius, and your invocation to the rural gods and goddesses, on their receiving me to these sequester'd ever verdant shades, have such a mixture of pleasantry and humour, that with all that solemn sanctity, which you lay to my charge, I could not help laughing very heartily : but the case is a little different, with regard to what you call the puritanical scheme, and the pious whim ; for your ridicule here has a levity, in my opinion, bordering a little upon the prophane. Yet, for all this, it seems, you must know what method Lucius took

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 57

took to make me comply with it, and insist upon my sending you the particulars. Can any thing be more extraordinary? However, to let you see how much I am yours, I obey and proceed.

A FEW days after our marriage, Lucius desired me to take a turn with him in the garden. I readily complied, and as I perceived an unusual thoughtfulness in his look, I endeavoured to divert him; when, taking hold of my hand, My dear Felicia, said he, I am going to make myself appear to you in a very ridiculous light; and to make a proposal, that I fear will expose me to be laughed at: but, perhaps, I injure you—I am persuaded I do—Custom makes us ashamed of our duty; we are ashamed of uttering solemn important truths, tho' of the greatest moment: for, however freely we talk of the social duties, it is with reluctance we mention those to our maker.

How you raise my curiosity! cry'd I; out with it, dear Sir, I beseech you, and don't keep me any longer in suspense.

You know, my dear, continued he, with a tender warmth, the blessings I am loaded with, I imagine myself raised from almost nothing, I see my father relieved from those distresses, which weighed me down; and, while

58 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

surrounded with plenty, I enjoy one blessing more, dearer than all the affluence of life— Ah! what is life compared to this! Can I, O can I, smother the gratitude of my heart? Can I confine it within the narrow limits of my own breast? Will not you join with me, in adoring the kind sovereign of the world? Shall we not, with united hearts, at once express the full sentiments of our souls, and keep alive the pious ardor, that longs for utterance? Shall we not, by petitioning the continuance of his mercy, implant and cherish those dispositions, that will make us more worthy of that mercy?

As I am equally interested in the blessings you mention, said I, I ought, perhaps, to reproach myself with a want of that sensibility, which you express with a warmth that, I must own, is very affecting. I have heard prayer ridiculed, and you must excuse me if I say, I am afraid I should look upon it, as a few minutes passed in a very irksome manner. There is something so solemn and gloomy, in the very idea of these set devotions, that they almost fright me.

LET us banish, said he, with a smile, the gloom of superstition, and religion will then appear all over amiable; her beauties will bright-

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 59

brighten upon the review, and the more we are acquainted with her, the more we shall be charmed with her graces. Prayer is one of the first duties, dictated by natural religion, the elder sister of Christianity: a duty, naturally arising from our obligations to, and dependence on, the universal parent, the friend of mankind, the patron of virtue, the most amiable, the most kind, and benevolent being in the universe: a duty, enjoined by Christianity, and enforced by the example of our great law-giver himself. Did we, my dear, address a stern and rigorous tyrant; a gloomy terror, and awful dread, might justly hang upon our spirits: but how great is the difference, when inspired by gratitude, and prompted by the glow of filial love, we address a being, whose all-commanding goodness demands our utmost esteem, our highest complacency! Surely, it must then be accompanied with a most sublime and rational delight!

I know it is objected, that, as we can inform the deity of nothing, but what he knew before, and can ask him for nothing, but what his original goodness will prompt him to grant, without our petitioning for it; prayer must be, in its own nature, absurd and impertinent.

It

60 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

IT is true, that this duty makes no change in God ; it is true, he will grant, without our petitions, what it is fit for infinite beneficence to give, and us to receive : but, it is as true, that the exercise of this duty, by changing the dispositions of the mind, changes that fitness ; as the humble suppliant is an object, more worthy of the divine blessing and protection, than the man, whom no sense of duty can fix, and no obligations bind. Does it not exalt, refine, and elevate the mind, by leading it to the contemplation of the most sublime and important truths ? Does it not call away the heart, from the pursuit of folly and madness ? Does it not raise the soul to the god of virtue, and, consequently, to virtue itself ? Does it not check the growth of pride, self-sufficiency, and malice ? Does it not keep awake the tender sentiments of humanity, our gratitude to our maker, our affection to our friends ?

ENOUGH, my dear Lucius, here I cry'd, enough. I own myself conquered. My reluctance is vanished.

You must know, Madam, it was at the close of the day, when Lucius desired me to walk out, and, as the sun was then setting, it began to grow dark ; we, therefore, went
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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 61

into the thickest part of a tuft of trees, where we might safely remain unobserved, when, like the first happy pair, we presented our evening orisons, which, for the future, were commonly performed in my chamber. When we came to remove, it was resolved, that this duty should be performed, twice a day, in the family; and, on this account, we chose the most sober young people, we could find, for our servants. I dare say, we have more order and decency observed in our family, than in any other within ten miles round us. We seldom omit going to church, twice every Sunday; not so much to gain any new acquisition of knowledge, as to keep alive a sense of our duty, and, at the same time, to set an example to the rest of the parish; the lower sort of which are greatly influenced by what they see us, great folks, as they call us, do: for here, with respect to example, one or two thousand pounds a year has a thousand times more efficacy, than all the advantages of superior sense and reason.

You have now two letters, since I received your last, and, if they don't give your ladyship the vapours, I may be in hopes, that you will, in time, be good for something else, besides giving felicity to one man, pleasure

62 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

sure to a few friends, and happiness to a number of dependents: you may in that case, I say, become ridiculous enough to exercise the wit, and exhaust the spirits of your gay companions; but you will never have the honour, like me, to find a friend, who will, with such sparkling wit, and fine address, endeavour to laugh you out of your religion.

I HAVE the honour to be

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

very humble servant,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXI.

IN order to introduce this Letter, Madam, it is necessary for me to inform you, that my father, before he took his leave of us, had several times hinted to Lucius, that it would be no disadvantageous employment for him, to learn the characters, and manners, of his tenants, and even of the poor residing on his estate: that he ought, particularly, to enquire into their circumstances, and that, as his interest was closely connected with theirs, to endeavour to serve them to the utmost of his power. As soon as my father was gone,

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 63

Lucius resolved to pay them a visit, and yesterday begun to put his design in execution, imagining that, as he was yet quite unknown, he might be the better able to inform himself to his satisfaction. Last night, after his return, I learnt his success, and as he happened upon some adventures, in this expedition, worth relating, I shall give them to you, while they are yet fresh in my memory.

He set out soon after it was light, dressed but meanly, and with only one servant out of livery, and rode to a farm house, at about two miles distance; where entering the yard, he dismounted, knocked at the door, and asked for the master, who came running from the stable, and, in a surly manner, demanded what he wanted. Lucius desired to be informed, if he knew any body that could supply him with a load of hay. This question at once civilized the farmer, who before seemed resolved to behave in a very brutal manner; but the bargain being soon made, Lucius went in to pay, and the farmer to receive his money, when a mug of ale being brought, the latter, after a good hearty draught, became, in an instant, one of the most sociable fellows in the universe: he shook Lucius twenty times by the hand, with a freedom, as great as if

64 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

if it had been authorized by a long acquaintance. Having entertained him, for half an hour together, with the price of corn and cattle at the market, Lucius, with the air of a stranger, enquired about his farm, and ask'd him, who was his landlord; when he began in the following manner.

Yo mun know, mefter, that I ha' got a new lonlord; I doant know who he is, but they say he has married one of your Lonon laidies, who, they say, has a mort o'money; besides, they say, he is one o'those good natured foo's look'e, that wull do ony mon a sarvice that axes him, thof he never sead him aw his born days; and besides, I believe the grey mare is the better horse, far he is meety fond of his lady, never stirs from whome, and never gets drunk. Now my dame says, that such a lonlord as this'n is fit to be imposed upon; but I doant mind what sha says, for I am mefter in my own house, and weant be contradicted by the best woman that wears a heead. No, no, let Tummus Clod aloan for that, before I'd be like my lonlord, I'd hong myself.

You are in the right, my friend, replied Lucius laughing, always take care to be master in your own house. Ey, Ey, rejoined the courageous farmer, I am a wise mon, I can tell ye that,

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 65

that, and a scollard too, for I can reead and write, and I was one whoale month in my accidancy, and larn'd something about parts of speeach, and neauns and prunams, and I hardly know what my self. I believe it, cry'd Lucius, you are a great man, and may be as great a man as your landlord yet, for ought I know.

Odzookers, gi'me yo'r hond again, cried the farmer, delighted with the compliment; yo'r an honest felley, I'll be sworn; but here's to ye heartily: but as I was a saying, my lonlord is a soft sort of a mon, and so, as I owe hauf a year's rent to my old lonlord, I have a mind my new lonlord should pey it, but yo' munno say one thing of it. O no, replied Lucius, I won't say any thing of it, without you tell your new landlord of it yourself. No, no, who would be foo' then? rejoined the farmer; I only fell a few trees that were stonding on the lond, time out o'mind, and which I should no' do by reet, a cause they were mentioned in my lease. Well, but as to the honesty of the thing, friend Thomas, cried Lucius, how do you reconcile that? Honesty! reply'd Clod, why as to that, mester, you know we mun live. It is true I am pretty well to pass; but a mon should take care o' his family, and ye know what the eye does no' see, the heart does no' rue, as the proverb

66 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

proverb goes ; and a little out of a mickle is no' mis'd. But pray, said Lucius, how much may the trees you have cut down be worth? Why look'e, my lad, reply'd the farmer, a hundred paund ; and so I shall ha' ten paund in my pocket, for my trouble ; that yo know is but fair. For your trouble ! cried Lucius, that is very extraordinary. Why yo know, rejoined the booby, a mon should be paid for his labour, and besides such a hen-peck'd—

HERE his wife entered, who it seems had overheard some part of this fine discourse ; and, giving him a look of contempt, You are a wise felley, cried she, to tell aw ye'r affairs to a streanger ! Ah ! ye oud foo', if I had no more wit than yo, ye might have been hang'd before now. Nay daam, cried he, dont scold, ye know that you advised me to it. I had no' sell'd the trees, if ye had no' made me. I made ye, cried she, colouring, and coming a step or two nearer ; I made ye ! I made ye tell of it too, did I ? answer me that, do duncie, do ; this mon, for ou'it yo know, may tell squire Monly. No, no, cried he trembling, he looks like an honest felley. An honest felley ! ye rascal ; an honest felley is a very proper person to tell that yo are a rogue. O that ever I should be yoaked to a foo' ! I am no more a foo' than other folks,

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 67

cried he, just loud enough to be heard. Than o-
ther folks, ye blockhead ! she rejoined, as loud
as she could bawl, I suppose yo mean me.—I a
fool, ye dog ! There take that ; and here she
seized the mug, and throwing it at her husband,
it flew over his head, whilst the liquor was pretty
equally divided between all the three. She now
burst into tears, sobbing out, Caw me a foo'
ye barbers mon yo ; I doant deserve to be
treeated a this'n, I doant, ye wicked munster yo.

Lucius here slipp'd out, and calling his ser-
vant, the honest courageous farmer followed
him to the door, scratching his head ; but look-
ing behind him, and seeing his wife seated in a
chair, at the other end of the room, he whisper-
ed, It is well you were here, measter, or I be-
lieve I should ha' murdered her. Lucius made
no answer ; but, mounting and riding off, told
him he would send a waggon for his hay ; and
immediately went to take a view of the de-
vastation made among his trees, when he
found eighteen or twenty of the largest oaks
lying ready to be carried away.

AGREABLE as this discovery might appear,
Lucius was under some perplexity, on thinking
how he ought to proceed with the farmer. He
now visited several of his other tenants, from
whom he learnt nothing worth mentioning.

They

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they were in general honest plain men, blunt, and extremely ignorant: and afterwards paid a visit to the minister of the parish, with whom he dined. On his return home, he observed, at a small distance from the road, a farm-house belonging to the same manor; hither he went; and entering without ceremony, thought he observed a wildness in the looks of the people, that seem'd to express a good deal of fear and apprehension. At first, he fancied he might be known; but he was soon of a different opinion, for the woman rising from her seat, with a trembling voice, asked what he wanted; and, in the same instant, the husband slipp'd out at the back door. Lucius reply'd, that he was very sorry, if his being there gave them any uneasiness; and, so far from doing them any hurt, he would serve them to the utmost of his power. The woman ey'd him very attentively, and stood, for some time, silent, which only served to encrease his curiosity; at last she thanked him, and ask'd again, what he wanted. Want! said he, why you behave so oddly, that I want to know what is the matter. You look like a good sort of woman, added he, and I should be glad to drink a dish of tea with you; which I had rather have here, than at a publick house. Lack-a-day said she, we never drink tea; but

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 69

yo shall be welcome, if yo'll fend for it, and cook it yo'r self; for I doant well know how to go about it. On this Lucius gave her a guinea; the tea and sugar were bought, and a teapot, and two earthen cups and saucers borrow'd; but when the change was brought to Lucius, he gave it amongst the children. This entirely won the good woman's heart; she now lost all her fears, and, at his request, readily ran to call her husband; who was no sooner seated, than Lucius informed him that he was a gentleman who had a pretty estate in that part of the country; but as he was upon a frolic, he did not chuse to tell his name. He then urged the farmer, to let him know the cause of that disorder, which, on his entering the house, was visible in all their countenances.

You great folks, cried the honest man, have no notion of the misfortunes and cares, that sometimes fall upon us, who are forced to struggle hard to get an honest living. One bad season pats us back so far, that several good ones can hardly repair our losses. This, mester, is my case. About four year ago I had a rot among my sheep, which kill'd above hauf, and those the best o' my flock; and as my corn proved bad, I could no' pay my rent: this put me behind hond; which my lonlord excused,

70 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

excused, and promised not to distress me : but as he is dead, and the lond sold to one Squire Monley, his executors, as they conno' seize my stock, threaten to throw me into jail, for the hauf year that is still due. This makes me o' most distracted. There is near a quarter due to my new lonlord, and if they should let me alone, I know no' when I shall be able to pay him. But,* werriday, I ha' no hopes that they will forbear any longer. Tho' my fears keep me awake, I every morning dread the leet, and when I rise, I tremble to think that, perhaps, the next neet I may lig in a prison; and when it grows dark, I am glad that, once more, I shall sleep in mine own bed, and be secure till morning. Sunday is, indeed, a happy dey : I then enjoy my security, but as the neet comes on, my fears return.—O mester, it breeaks my heart to think what will become of my poor family, which you see is none of the smallest ! I am a feard to go about my work. I tremble at the feet of a stroanger. I hardly know what to do. In short, I am o' most mad.

Lucius was so extremely affected at the moving expressive tone, and the artless simplicity, with which the poor man told his distress, that he

* A word of nearly the same meaning as well-a-day.

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 71

he could scarcely refrain from tears, and it was with much difficulty that he concealed his concern.

WELL but suppose, you should tell your case to your new landlord, said Lucius, if you can give him proof that you are an honest man, he may, perhaps, take the debt upon himself, and rather than lose a good tenant give you time for payment. I know him, he is a good-natur'd man, and I dare say he will not be hard upon you.

No, no, replied the unhappy man; I cou'd sooner dee than do it. I cou'd never speak freely to such a rich mon. I am not used to such company. Besides, it would signify nothing. It is a miserable life to be all'as in fear!

Now I have thought of something, cried Lucius, with a forced smile, that I am sure will do. Have you not some timber growing on your land? Yes, returned the farmer; but what then? Why, I'll tell you, reply'd Lucius, suppose you cut it down, and sell it, and pay your debt with the money; Mr Manly will never miss it.

THE farmer here held up his hands, and his wife examined him more narrowly, and, if possible, with greater terror than before. At last, the honest man, starting up, as if affronted,
D shock'd,

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shock'd, and insulted, cry'd, Get out o' my house, ye villain; do ye tak me for a rogue? And, here he seiz'd a large oak sapling, that stood in the chimney corner. Lucius got up, and was beginning to speak in his own defence; but he had hardly opened his lips, when he was interrupted. Yo a gentleman! yo the devil! Ay, cry'd the wife, it is the devil, sure enough, for all he has hid his cloven foot. Here, gi' me the money, cried she to her children; there, tak yo'r curst money, added she, throwing it at him; every gesture expressing the fright and agitation of her mind. Lucius endeavoured, in vain, to speak; Get out, was still repeated, and the husband, holding up his sapling, advancing, cry'd, I'll see if he be the devil or no. On this poor Lucius, retreating backwards, tumbled over the threshold into the yard, and the door was immediately clapp'd to, and lock'd. He received, however, not the least damage by the fall, except what his coat and wig sustained; for a heap of friendly dung, that had been kindly raised by some cows and horses, received the fallen, tho' formidable Lucius. But, though his bed was soft, it was not a fit place to rest in; he arose, therefore, immediately, when he overheard the poor honest man cry out to himself:

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 73

God forbid that I should be such a villain, as this felley would ha me be. I'd go to a jail first. If I am miserable, I am honest at least, and, after aw, that is some comfort. Mean while the servant, who was walking in the yard, seeing Lucius in this disorder, ran to his assistance; but, finding him already upon his legs, without speaking a word, in a moment broke the door, which, it seems, was a very slight one, to pieces. The woman was, unhappily, fainted away in a chair, and the good man was assisting her: him he seized by the collar, and, in an instant, threw up his heels, and was preparing to revenge the abuse done to his master, when Lucius put aside the blow, and, with difficulty, dragged him away, for he quitted his hold with much reluctance. But they had hardly mounted their horses, when the farmer's son, and a servant man and maid, who had heard the bustle, the two first from the stable, and the last from the dairy, came running to the field of battle. A speedy retreat was absolutely necessary, for this was now an improper time to hold a parly; they, therefore, having gained the gate of the yard, set spurs to their horses, and were soon out of sight.

Thus, Madam, I have given you the histo-

74 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

ry of one day's ramble, and, if nothing prevents, I shall, very speedily, send you the sequel of the story of these two farmers with such opposite characters. Mean time I am very much

YOUR LADYSHIP'S, &c.

FELICIA MANLY.

L E T T E R XXXII.

YOU think it strange, Madam, that tho' Lucius should relate the discourse of the farmers, in the dialect of the county, I should have memory sufficient to retain the pronunciation; and, from this remark, you infer, that I have had more regard to your diversion, than to the veracity of an historian. But here you are greatly mistaken; you ought to consider the difficulty of living in the country, without catching the peculiarities of the language. This I have sufficiently obtained. So that I have nothing more to do, than to remember the words: the pronunciation I have already. I have a good deal of the country accent, in my ordinary conversation, and, whenever I am disposed to it, can talk in the true
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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 75

dialect, almost, as fluently as the sprightly milkmaid, or the wife of the plowman.

THE day after the adventure of the two farmers, I was no sooner stirring, than I heard an unusual bustle below stairs, and several persons talking very loud, with some sounds, which, though I could not perfectly understand, seemed to express great amazement. My woman could give me no satisfaction, I, therefore, desired her to ring the bell; when a servant entered the room, with as much terror in her looks, as if she had just seen a ghost. What is the matter, Mary? said I; you look frightened. O law, Madam, cried she, wud * you think it! Did you ever hear the like? The devil has appeared to my † neam and my naunt Saunders, and told them, that as how—as how—As how what? returned I.

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* *You*, in this county, carries, with it, something of the idea of a compliment, as expressing more respect than *Yo*; and, for this reason, husbands and wives, in particular, who, on common occasions, politely, as they think, make use of the word *You*, whenever they quarrel constantly contract it into *Yo*. This is an observation particularly recommended to the consideration of that ingenious gentleman, the compiler of the English dictionary, now in the press.

† My neam, and my naunt; other counties say gaffer and gammer.

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Why as how, continued she, he wud ha him cut down aw the 'squire's trees, and he wud gi' him a power o' money for them; and he gived them some money, which was, I suppose, for arnest; but they wud no' tak' it. Indeed, Madam, it is true; for, I verily believe, we shall ha' the w'oll story in print. Pho, Pho, is that all? cried I; it is an idle tale, take my word for it. Pray what sort of a devil was it? O! he was a meety civil devil at first, said she, and as like a hondsome man as ever you seed; but, at last, he vanished out o' the door, as one may say, in a flash o' fire; and then they * made the door after him, when an ugly devil came pop through the key hole, and wud fean ha' murdered the good man; but the hondsome devil poo'd him away, and wud no' let him; but, as they went out, they had like to ha' takken the side o' the house wi' em; for the door was broken aw to pieces, and to be sure there was a great smell of brimstone. I mar'l whether the hondsome devil had no' great saucer een, when my neam was going to strike him; for goody Simple says, sha thinks sha heard say as much. But the ugly devil had two great platter een, like balls of fire, and turned into the

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terriblest creature that ever was seen. There is nothing in it, Mary, said I, I am sure of it. Nay, Madam, said she, to be sure you know best, and I am a'most o' your mind, for tho' they say, old Nick can dizen himself like an angel of leet, yet yo know as how he can never go without his cloven foot; and Betty Saunders look'd wi' aw the een in her head, but cou'd na see it. But, methinks, it is a pitty such a fine story shud no' be true. For, of aw things, I like to hear about ghosts, and haunted housin, and such like. Our Robin, Madam, loff'd at goody Simple, and said shu was a lying awd witch, and talk'd as thof he would kick her out o' the house; but we wud no let him; and then he flew into a passion, and said his een were no more like platters, nor balls of fire, than hern, and if shu said it again, he wud kick her aw, breech, I mean, saving your presence. Here she dropped a courtesy. But, continued she, we cou'd no tell what to mak o' that, for the squire came in, and said, Hush, not a word, Robin; and then staid to hear the woman himself, while she eat the meat I giv'd her quietly, and made me fetch her a mug of ale.

WELL, said I, I have enough of this idle stuff; tell John he must go and bring Mrs.

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Saunders to me. Here Lucius appeared, and added, And her husband too, and bid him be sure to tell him he must not be frightened; for I have some good news for him. And then coming to me, as Mary left the room, Well, my dear, said he, you find I am mounted on the wings of fame; Mary, I suppose, has given you a full account. O yes, said I, they are resolved to make a devil of you; they have already collected some diabolical circumstances, and, I don't doubt but before night they will have dressed up you, and your man, with all the terrors that the most wild imagination can invent. No matter, said Lucius, though they paint me in the character of a devil, the portrait they give of me is so unlike the original, that I shall never be known by it. If poor Robin is already such a monster, what must he be by to-morrow morning, when the story will be spread thro' the whole county, and every one has added some dreadful circumstance to the fiction? Horns and hoofs will be the least of his deformities. Had the old woman stay'd till then, before she brought us the news, poor Robin would have gaped, and stared, and wondered, with the rest. However, I am glad the honest farmer is sent for. The poor man's distresses have touched
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me very nearly, and something must be done for him. I intended to send to him this afternoon, but I am better pleased that I shall see him this morning, since he will now have a few hours taken from his anxiety, and added to his happiness. A valuable consideration, said I, that ought not to be forgot, whenever we intend to confer an obligation.

In about two hours time, the honest farmer made his appearance, on horseback, with his wife behind him, fresh shaved, and both dressed out in their Sunday's garb. All the servants, in an instant, ran out to see them; except my woman, and Robin, who was, purposely, sent out of the way, on a message to Nottingham; for they had been informed of their coming, by John, who returned near an hour before. They dismounted at the door, when a volley of questions were, in a moment, discharged from every mouth, to which it was impossible for either of them to answer. This Lucius, and I, observed from the dining room window. I immediately went down, and found that the men had now surrounded the farmer, and the maids his wife, whom they all viewed with looks of astonishment, all desirous of being answered first, as thinking their own ques-

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tion of the most consequence. I stood, in the hall, near a minute, to observe this ridiculous scene; but, whatever answer they had received, I observed a general air of dissatisfaction, almost as great as that which appeared immediately after; when, in order to draw the good couple from the clamour of this tormenting persecution, I ordered them to be conducted into a back parlour, facing the garden, and I could hear distinctly, as they separated, one cry, No een of fire! another, No cloven foot! and, from different voices, No horns! No tail! No nothing, I think, It's a pity! Ah! what a fine story is here come to nought!

THEY had been in the parlour about two minutes, when I went to them. I found them standing; but, taking a chair myself, insisted upon their being seated, which, after some clumsy scrapes from the one, and as awkward cutesies from the other, they, at last, complied with; but sat together, close up to the wall, in the most distant corner of the room. As soon as this ceremonial was over, which lasted some time, for these country people certainly think good manners consists in being troublesome, Mrs. Saunders, said I, they tell very strange things of you. You have

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have been dealing with the devil, it seems; at least, he has been paying you a visit. Who, I deal with the devil? cry'd the good woman, in a fright; Lord help me, I hope I ha' nothing to do wi' him. I hope so too, said I; but, pray what foundation is there for this strange story? Here, she related it, in much the same manner that Lucius had done, only omitting her husband's account of his misfortunes, and making use of the terms, handsome devil, and ugly devil, to make a distinction between them: but she mistook one circumstance; which, indeed, had, as she understood it, a very diabolical appearance; for she asserted, that the last time Lucius and Robin entered the house, they came in thro' the key hole, and broke the door to pieces, as they went out; but, here the husband interposed, and set her right; when she apologized for her mistake, by saying, that she saw the door locked, before she fainted away, and when she came to herself, she found it broke to pieces; and as she was before pretty sure it was the devil, she thought it most natural for him to come in at the key-hole, and to take the side of the house, or the door, at least, away with him, when he went out; for this she remembered to have heard, when

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a child, was his common custom. And she concluded, with assuring me, that she would not tell a lye about it. I believe so, said I, and I am very well pleased with your sincerity; for, as I know the story better than you, you could not have deceived me. That is very strange, cry'd the honest man, with a look of amazement; Know it better than we! Why, Madam, you was no' in my house too! If it be strange, said I, it is true; but I heard a very different story this morning. Why as to the matter of that, Madam, cry'd the wife, folks tell so many lyes about it, that I am asheamed to hear them: and, wud you think it? they are angry at me, a cause I weant fey as they fey, and wull ha' it their own wey, whether I wull or no.

WELL, that is not your fault, said I; but you should not have so readily imagined it to be an evil spirit. Nor should you, Mr Saunders, have been so ready to conclude him a rogue. You ought, at least, to have heard what he had to say in his own defence, for it was not without reason, that he made the propofal of your cutting down Mr Manly's trees. You may take my word for it, that you are both mistaken. I know every particular of the story. You, Mr Saunders, gave
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a very moving account of your misfortunes to a very worthy gentleman, the person you call the handsome devil. He heartily pitied you : he resolved to serve you : and, I assure you, that you may now sleep securely, and awake without dread ; for he has pleaded your cause so effectually to Mr Manly, that he has promised to take the debt upon himself, and to wait till you can, conveniently, pay him. The farmer lifted up his eyes, and, in an ecstasy, cried out, God bless 'in ! and then seemed endeavouring to say more, but stopped, as if the struggle in his breast, between joy and gratitude, choaked up his voice : however, some tears, at least, as expressive as words, stood ready to fall from his eyes, which, with once or twice turning aside his head, he wip'd away with the back of his hand. Mean while, the good woman cried out, in a shrill key : A handsome devil ! A handsome angel ! God reward him, and the squire to boot. But what made the elevation of her voice more remarkable, was the low trembling diffidence with which she spoke before. There was now a silence of, at least, half a minute, which ended in the old woman's bursting out a crying, which she did most heartily, repeating several times, with
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her hand on her husband's knee, and her eyes fixed very affectionately on his, Well, I was never so glad in aw my life.—No never in aw my life. At last, the farmer cried, lifting up his eyes, and looking at me, An angel! ay, an angel indeed! or, after aw the usage I ha' g'n him——Well, God's blessing be upon you aw! I thank you, Mr Saunders, said I, if you reckon me among the number. But here comes either your landlord, or your friend.

LUCIUS, who had been walking in the garden, in order to give me time to prepare them to see him, was now coming up an avenue facing the door; but, at the mention of the word landlord, I observed, that the poor man's diffidence and reserve, which began to wear off, immediately returned, and his features, in a moment, became contracted; perhaps his joy was damped by the very idea of a person, whom he had before considered only as an object of fear. But, however this be, not the least alteration appeared in the wife, except a little female ambition, or rather, that regard for decency, and decorum of character, which is as visible in the spruce dairy maid, as in the dutchess. She, therefore, took her eyes from her husband, and her hand from his knee,

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laid smooth her clean, though coarse white apron, pulled down, lower, a pair of old-fashioned ruffles, and streak'd her hair under her cap: and this was done with that natural motion, and composed look, which sometimes makes all the distinction between these actions, when performed by a country housewife, and the more affected airs of some lady of distinction.

LUCIUS now opened the door, when I cried, O Sir, is it you? I have prepared them to see you, and you may safely come in, without being taken for a devil. And then addressing myself to the farmer, Here is your friend, said I, do you know him, now he has changed his dress? Lucius returned my compliment, and then running to the farmer, who was standing biting his hat, by the side of his wife, My honest friend, said he, I am glad to see you. Well, are you disposed to knock me down now? The farmer scraped, the wife curtsied, and both begged his pardon. Well, replied he, you find, I don't resent your treatment of me. But, Madam, won't you favour me with a glass of wine, to drink to my new friends? added he, turning to me. To be sure, said I, and rung the bell, on which, a servant coming, the wine was called for, and

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and being brought, the man was ordered to retire. Lucius filled, and taking the farmer by the hand, wished him happier days; and having, each of them, drank their glass, he desired the honest man to take a turn or two with him in the garden; and, at the same time, begg'd the favour of me to go, with them, alledging, that I might leave my woman to keep Mrs Saunders company.

As this story, of the appearance of the devil, had spread, with wonderful swiftness, thro' the country, Lucius was unwilling it should be known, that he had any hand in it. And, indeed, he had not the least ambition of being distinguished, among the country gentlemen, by the name of the handsome devil; a title, which would be inevitably given him, was he known to be the principal actor. And, besides, as he had more tenants to visit, he would not have it mentioned, that he had ever visited any of them; since the rest might expect to see him, in the same manner, and, being put upon their guard, might frustrate his design, of penetrating into their characters, manners, and circumstances. These motives were the rise of this preconcerted plot, of making him appear rather as the friend of Lucius, than as Lucius himself, before the farmer's wife;

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wife ; whom, tho' a very good sort of a woman, he was unwilling to trust with a secret of such consequence.

WE were no sooner in the garden, than the farmer, addressing himself to Lucius, said, You mun excuse me,—I conno' thank you as I wud. If you could read my thowts, there wud be no need of words to tell you my joy, my surprize, my gratitude. But ye mun forgi' me, if I say, I love you, for it is no' my fault, I conno' help it : and this lady mun forgi' me too : our ladies are so proud they weant speak to a poor mon ; but shu is so good, so free, and the messenger of such good news, that I conno' help loving her ; and my heart will say, in spight o' me, God blest-her, and my kind freend : and e'en let it sey so and it wull : for, if I did no' gi' my heart this vent, I verily believe it wud burst. I never preyd so heartily, in aw my born days, and never said prayers wi' hauf the pleasure I say these two or three words. You have made a new mon o' me; I verily believe, I cou'd o'most pray for you as well as a parson ; ay, as well as thof I read in a book. Thank you, thank you, God blest you too, we both reply'd, at the same time, with a satisfaction, though less tumultous, as delightful, at least,

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as his: and, indeed, the poor man appeared raised above himself; the transports of his joy, by getting a vent in words, seemed to become more exquisite. He talked with a greater volubility of speech, to which a half pint glass of wine, which he had lately drank, might, perhaps, contribute. His eyes sparkled with affectionate gratitude, and a kind of delightful rapture seemed hovering over every lineament of his countenance.

THE good man was now silent, but, after a short pause, resumed, Is this the mon I turned out o' my house? Is this he, that I was yeafterday going to strike? Well, no matter, had I used him kindly, I shud no' ha' know'd him so weel. I wud ha' done ony honest thing for him, for saving me from a jeyl, I wud ha' look'd upon him, as my best freend. It wud ha' been a kind action, and I shud ha' remembered it as long as I lived; but, methinks, I shud no' ha' loved him so weel as I do now. But, good Sir, are you sure 'squire Monley weant be hard upon me? Never fear it, replied I, I will answer for your landlord. He thanked me, and then looking at Lucius, cry'd, My generous friend, mun not I know to whom I am obliged? Mun not I know your neame? O yes,

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reply'd Lucius, this you shall soon know; but I must desire you to keep it a secret, and not to let, even your wife or son, know that my name is Manly. What my lord himself! cried he, in a rapture: then, indeed, I ha' nothing to fear! My lord that I have abused! My lord that is so generous! I can only wonder. What shall I do for you? How mun I mak you amends? Leave that to me, Lucius reply'd, here are forty guineas, that I have put in my pocket for you, to pay the executors of your late landlord, which you must do this evening, before you go; you may give me a note for the money, and I will contrive a way for you to pay it again. I then took my turn, and telling him, that as he had been so distressed, he, and his family, might want some of the common necessities of life, to supply which, I desired his acceptance of five guineas, which he received, bowing low, with a submissive kind of joy and rapture. Lucius, now, gave him an account of his going to Thomas Clod's, and of his telling him, that he had cut down his trees; but, as he was yet undetermined how to proceed with him, desired him to keep a strict watch, that none of them were removed, and no more cut down, without giving him

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him immediate notice; adding, that he would pay him handsomely for his trouble: and dinner being now ready, the farmer went in, and rejoined his wife. They both dined at our table, and, after Lucius had again privately enjoined the good man to secrecy, they, with many warm, though homely testimonies of gratitude, took their leave.

I am, Madam,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

most affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXIII.

DEAR MADAM,

LUCIUS has been again among his tenants, and has now finished his ramble. The last time he was out upon this expedition, he observed a man with white locks, and a venerable aspect; but want and care, rather than extreme old age, seemed to have silvered his hair; his eyes were hollow, his person tall and meager, and he had a placid serenity in his countenance, that bespoke a kind of joyful composure of mind. His coat was of broadcloth, and, though worn thread bare, and

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and well patched, was perfectly clean. He was coming out of a house, with a bag in his hand, which he seemed desirous to conceal. The oddness of his appearance, in a country village, joined to an air, that seemed to command respect, engaged the attention of Lucius, who became curious enough to form a resolution to know, if possible, who he was, and what that could be, which he endeavoured to conceal: and, therefore, dismounting, he led his horse by the bridle, and followed, at some distance, till he saw him enter a small thatched house, and shut the door after him. Thither Lucius directed his steps, and, on his arrival, was going to knock at the door, when, turning his head to the window, he observed the same person standing before a table, and, with his eyes lift up to heaven, with a look of thankfulness, utter a seemingly devout ejaculation, and then sit down by the side of an elderly woman. He now gave a rap at the door, with the butt end of his whip, on which, as it happened not to be latched, it immediately flew open, when, to his great astonishment, he saw an earthen plate of grains, smoaking on the table, which they endeavoured to conceal, by throwing the ends of a rag-

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ragged damask napkin, which served for a table cloth, over it; and immediately rose up.

LUCIUS's surprise was hardly to be expressed. Is this, said he, what occasioned such marks of devotion, such thankfulness and gratitude? Was it this that you were so desirous to conceal? Yes, replied the old man; but, why should you rudely press to discover, what I was unwilling to have known? Why should you thus mortify the little pride that is left me? I beg pardon, said Lucius, for an intrusion, which I cannot justify: but satisfy my curiosity, and let me know by what terrible disaster you are drove to this dreadful extremity. Yet stay—let me, first, prevail upon you to provide some provisions more fit for human creatures. You must have a great mind to be able to support such want, and to rejoice over a meal, that would make others, of less piety, repine at providence. Though, in the midst of affluence, I could almost envy your resignation, that bespeaks you more than human. Accept of this, Sir, continued Lucius, throwing down five guineas upon the table, and provide something more proper for your refreshment. The old man, first lifting up his eyes to heaven, took up the money, with an air of extreme thankfulness,

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fulness, accompanied with very polite expressions of gratitude ; and immediately gave one of the pieces to his wife, who presently returned with some beef-steaks, and a loaf ; however, in this interval, they took their seats, and the old man began in the following manner.

I DON'T wonder at your being surpris'd at a meal, which, when I was of your age, would have given me equal astonishment ; but want will make us relish the coarsest fair, and hunger sweeten the most disagreeable morsel. I was born a gentleman, but spent a good fortune in the service of an ungrateful family, and, as I am now persuaded, in a very bad cause. I am a native of Scotland, and was educated in the national religion ; but carried away by the heat of youth, and a set of ridiculous principles, which I imbibed from some of my companions, I sold my estate, and went over into Ireland, and entered, as a volunteer, in king James's army, where I fought in defence of a religion, the most opposite to my own. But, I must do myself the justice to say, that ambition was not my motive. I was present at the battle of the Boyne, and in almost every battle afterwards, in which my master distinguished himself by a superior cowardice.—But, I will not tire you, with
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a repetition of what every body knows already. At the battle of Aghrim, when our army was entirely routed, it was with difficulty I made my escape ; and, as I lost all my baggage, my fortune, which, before, was almost exhausted, was, by this event, entirely ruined. I returned into Scotland, with a wife and two young children : and pleased with the hopes of seeing my relations, particularly, a tender father, and a brother, with whom I had been brought up from my infancy, I arrived at Kirkaldy, the place of my birth, where I found that my father died at London, sometime before. Here, I soon experienced, that my wants, instead of entitling me to relief, only served as a pretence for treating me with contempt. Nay, my nearest relations hardly knew me. It was with difficulty, that I got access, even to my brother, though of the same political principles with myself. I was suffered to wait in the hall, like a common servant. I was choaked with indignation, yet I smothered my resentment : in short, after only lying a night or two in his house, with a barbarity, unknown to savages, I, with my wife and children, after many affronts, were civilly turned out of doors, and obliged to shift for ourselves. Strange effect

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of immoderate self-love ! said Lucius ; in its extremes, the most odious of all the passions, and the most fruitful of mischief ! How strong must it be, when it can thus cancel the sacred bond of nature, and dissolve the holy tye of brotherhood ! Ay, ay, reply'd the old man, whoever is in want, let him apply to a stranger, and he will have no gall poured over the friendly morsel. If he is in distress, let him fly to his friend, and he will not be humbled with the contumely of a proud relation. I was now a stranger in the very town where I was born, and where I had spent the greatest part of my life. Stung to the quick with this indignity, and enraged beyond all possibility of bearing the place, my native country became hateful to me. I resolved to set out for England, and had it not been for the humanity of some persons, with whom I had a very slender acquaintance, and, particularly, a gentleman, a friend of my father's, who, with a chearful benevolence, that doubled the obligation, supplied me with what was necessary to bear the expence of my journey ; I might, perhaps, have been driven to the extremity of begging my bread.

You see, Sir, continued he, that, amidst the greatest misfortunes, the contempt of my

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relations still sticks nearest my heart; not that it now gives me any great uneasiness, for my affection for them is converted into a calm and settled contempt. Yet, were our circumstances changed, I would still serve them to the utmost of my power. I would not, indeed, give them my esteem: this I reserve for the deserving.—But I tire you with my reflections.

WE arrived in London, and, by the assistance of a friend, I entered into trade; but by ridiculously lending my note to an acquaintance, the most pernicious and destructive custom, that ever was introduced amongst tradesmen, I was reduced to very great extremities. However, these were, at last, surmounted, and, with a mixture of success and misfortune, I continued in the same station for upwards of twenty years: and, believe me, Sir, abject as my condition now seems, it appears to me, even preferable to the anxiety I then frequently felt, from the fear of duns, the dread of a jail, and the uneasy apprehension, lest some honest man should lose by my misfortunes: the last, in particular, was a constant shock to my humanity, and where the person was in low circumstances, and had a family that, by my means, would be sufferers, the thought stung me to the soul, and

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gave me the most pungent anguish. Add to this, the many mortifications I received from the purse-proud tradesman, whose common maxim is, that, *Every man may be rich if he will*; and that frequent breach of veracity, with respect to times of payment, which the necessity of my affairs sometimes rendered unavoidable. This last, a love of justice, and a fixed and steady regard for truth, rendered most irksome and painful: in one word, it was a wound festering in my conscience.

At last, I sold my stock, paid my debts, and retired to this place, with my wife and a boy of ten years old. I chearfully maintained my family, by my labour, while my strength lasted, and enjoyed a serenity that I cannot remember to have tasted, in the midst of my early affluence. With a conscience undisturbed, and a mind free from care, I applied myself to reflection, and softened the fatigue of labour, with large draughts of knowledge, with an improvement in piety, and the study of virtue and religion. I had before learnt the ways of men, I now took a review of my own. I had long since imbibed the philosophy of the schools: I now reduced it to practice, and laying by my Seneca and Epictetus, applied myself to the study of

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the scriptures, and to open my heart for the reception of those divine truths, which lead the mind to God. Wrapp'd up in a happy solitude, I consider every thing, here below, only as it tends to my eternal welfare, and, while I grasp at an immortality of joy, find but little inconvenience from the coarseness, and indelicacy, of my poor repast. I have no other assistance, but what I receive from my dear boy, who is now above twenty. With a filial affection, he forces me to receive a good part of the fruits of his labour; but, alas! that is much too little to find him in cloaths, and us in the means of subsistence; and I am loth to have my wants known, lest this should again subject me to contempt, and more particularly as it might prejudice his hopes; for he is excessively fond of a farmer's daughter, who, though her father is a weak, and no very honest man, is very worthy of his affection. We have lived, for some time, on those fallads, which the fields afford; but they are not now to be had: young nettle tops, boiled, were next our daily food; of these being tired, I, some days ago, tasted some fresh grains; I was hungry, and found them palatable, for what will not hunger make so? And, as I frequently amuse myself with fish-

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ing, by which I, sometimes, gain a delicious repast, I am not suspected of wanting them for my own nourishment. This circumstance affords me no small pleasure, for all temporal happiness consists more in the opinion of others, than on what we eat and drink.

I HAVE just mentioned my son to you, he is a lad of probity and integrity, and, if I may judge, from the present you have just made me, you are in circumstances, that will allow you to be of service to him: let me recommend him to your protection.

PITY, Lucius says, was the least of all the passions which seized him, upon hearing this story; his compassion gave way to surprise and admiration: and the graceful manner, with which this truly venerable man expressed himself, still heightened that esteem, which was justly raised, by such exalted piety, such contentment and resignation. Lucius, therefore, very frankly replied, that he judged right, as to his circumstance; but that he had not less inclination, than ability, to serve them all. He desired his friendship. He took him by the hand, and, with the strongest expressions of esteem, assured him, that he would do him all the service in his power. The steaks were now ready, and the good man

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asked him, if he would not do him the honour to partake of a meal, which he himself had enabled them to provide. As Lucius had not dined, he, very readily, accepted the invitation, on condition, that he, and his son, should dine with him the next day, when they would consider what could be done for the young man. This was immediately agreed to, and, while they were at table, Lucius desired him to explain several passages in his story, which he did not perfectly understand, and, particularly, what he meant by lending of notes. This being done, the discourse again turned upon the hardships he suffered, with respect to his way of living; hardships, which Lucius said, were unknown to the rest of mankind, and which he could not think of, without expressing the most lively marks of astonishment. The good man smiled. At first, said he, this gave me some uneasy thoughts; but I soon learnt to conquer them, and to be thankful for the coarsest morsel. I represented to myself the excruciating tortures, which rack numbers of mankind, and asked myself, what comparison could be made between exquisite pain, and a mouthful of unpalatable provisions: I acknowledged the difference, and blessed the being that made our

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case preferable to theirs. The hardships endured in sieges are much greater than ours, for, at the siege of Derry, a plate of grains would have been delicious fare. They would have looked upon this as a blessing, and shall I repine at what would have filled them with joy? Besides, could I have made my case known, which my aversion to the contempt, which always attends poverty, and my regard for my son has prevented, we might have lived in a much better manner; for whey, and butter-milk, would not have been refused me. My wife and I are both satisfied, and thoroughly convinced, that true happiness does not consist in such trifles as these: for, wherever there is inward complacency, humanity of heart, and devout thankfulness, there is content, there is the noblest felicity.

'Tis very strange, said Lucius; but, whoever calls for assistance, is sure to meet with contempt and scorn, from every ignorant blockhead. Yet, there is a chain, which runs through all nature, by which every species of beings have a dependence upon each other. But, let us view only man, that proud being, that, in spite of all the clearest dictates of reason, and all the laws and impulses of nature, would fain persuade himself that he

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stands alone, and free from obligations ; wraps himself up in self-sufficiency, and refuses to confer on another, what, he imagines, he does not want himself. The infant no sooner breathes, than, with a puling cry, he proclaims his wants, which the fond mother is, at first, but little able to relieve ; he is, therefore, committed to strangers, and receives his first obligations from them. He grows up, and daily demands help from his parents, and, as his years encrease, his dependence, and obligations, become more general, even for the means of life, the support of his very being, and the cultivation of his mind ; till, at last, he becomes a debtor to thousands. If he is ashamed of this dependence, for the same reason he must be ashamed that he is a man. But if, after this, he refuses his assistance, or contemns him that stands in need of it, he is no longer a man, but a monster.

FINE reasons ! fine reasons ! cry'd the old man, smiling ; but you will never be able to persuade a miser, that avarice is a greater crime than poverty ; or any body else, that to be poor is not to be contemptible. There is no man so stupid, said Lucius, as to believe that poverty is really criminal, or even contemptible : it is, indeed, in their opinion, a thing

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thing to be dreaded, not that they think it infectious, but for fear they should be asked for what they cannot give, consistently with their notions of self love, nor refuse, without some inward commotions, on the side of humanity. And, for this reason, those, who, from an immoderate and false self-love, study to keep their humanity under, always take care, for their own sakes, to represent poverty to themselves, as something ridiculous, mean, and contemptible. They are sensible of the amiableness of the friendly dispositions; and a fear of being suspected to want, either them, or the abilities necessary for the exercise of them, may, possibly, be the principal reasons, why the rich are ashamed of their poor relations; as it may be thought, that they themselves are either not so wealthy as is imagined, and, therefore, that *they cannot*, or that they have nothing really amiable in them, and, therefore *will not*, relieve them. A kind of pride, the most wicked in itself, and the most pernicious to society.

Thus we may derive all the calumny that falls upon the unfortunate, from the same self-interested views; a struggle against the strong impressions of nature, an endeavour to suppress the more generous sentiments of humanity.

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nity. From my little experience, I have found, that, whenever a man fails, let his probity have been ever so conspicuous, it then becomes necessary, that his conduct should be arraigned, and more particularly so by his relations, and the self-interested amongst his friends ; for where no act of humanity is expected, the man may still remain esteemed. His virtues, such as industry, care, and application, are not what they look for ; these, therefore, are thrown aside as useless lumber : but, if an act of humanity be found, though he was then in a capacity to be generous, it is immediately thrown into the heap of follies ; nor is there an indiscretion in his whole life, that can be thought of, but it is mentioned, to encrease the load. No wonder, then, that it becomes enormous. Thus want of success, which no mortal can secure, is charged as guilt, and the unhappy honest man is treated with a hundred times more contempt and obloquy, than the successful villain. And self-love, shifting the disgrace further from itself the relations of a husband throw the greatest load of blame on his wife, whilst those, on her side, cast it back on the husband.

WILL she never have done ? methinks,

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 105

Madam, I hear you say. Yes, I answer. But you ought to remember, that I have been giving you the history of a hero in patience, and this should put your ladyship in mind, that it does not become you to express much uneasiness at such a trifle, as the length of a letter; for I have nothing more to inform you, but that Lucius, having dined heartily, took his leave, and, with the hopes of seeing the good man and his son, the next day, jogged home. And, therefore, I am at liberty to break off, and subscribe myself

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

most sincere friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXIV.

WELL, Madam, I have now seen this venerable old man, whose history I gave you, in my last; and, I can assure you, he perfectly answers the description Lucius gave me of him. His son is a well made agreeable young fellow, and, though he finished his education in a country village, it seems has a good share of learning; but this is not

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at all surprising, as his father was his tutor. His behaviour has too much of the gentleman, for him ever to make a good clown; and he has too much bashfulness to pass for a gentleman. It was easy to see that he had never been in such company before; for he blushed, whenever he was spoke to, and, when he answered, it was with as much diffidence, and precaution in placing his words, as if he had been before a magistrate. In short, if his sentiments are at all answerable to the ingenuity of his look, he, with his fair Daphne, or Amaryllis, might make a good figure in a pastoral eclogue.

AFTER dinner, under the pretence of taking a walk in the garden, Lucius conducted us to a neat house, just on the outside of the back door, leading into the fields. He asked the good man how he liked it, and he, as he expected, admiring the situation, Lucius, in very polite terms, desired his acceptance of it for life. Our venerable guest received this favour, with all imaginable testimonies of gratitude; while his son, by his looks, seemed in a rapture of joy: and, indeed, as it has only four rooms, that is, two on a floor, it is a mansion proper enough for an anchorite. Besides, Lucius has promised to furnish it, and I

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am to make him a present of as many books, as he shall have occasion for. A catalogue of some of which, I have engaged our hermit himself to write out for me.

WHILE they were taking a view of this small building, a servant came to inform us, that the farmer, who had been here some days before, desired to speak with his master. Lucius, immediately, gave orders that he should be admitted; the honest man came, and, stepping aside with him, informed him, that the trees, which he had been ordered to watch, were to be removed the next day. At this news, Lucius sent for Clod, with orders that he should come directly, and bring his counter-lease. Lucius had, before, related the whole affair to Mellifont, and he again to a gentleman of the law, who has an estate in this part of the country; he strenuously asserted, that he ought to undergo the penalty mentioned in his contract, that is to pay one hundred pounds, to forfeit his lease, and to make good the damage; and that lenity, in this case, would be an ill precedent, with respect to the other tenants: whilst Lucius was of opinion, that as the whole affair had been told to him in confidence, his honour would not permit him to proceed to extremities,

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ties; and the good old man, to whom he now told the story, without mentioning the farmer's name, was of the same opinion; but could not help smiling at the silly fellow's talking of being paid for his trouble, in cutting down trees that he had no right to meddle with. The conversation then turned on the young man, who was next to be provided for, and being found to be very well qualified for the post, he was chose house steward, and an apartment assigned him in our house, consisting of a bed-chamber, a parlour, and a little room for an office.

THE joy of the tender parent was now compleat, and tears of gratitude rolled down his venerable cheeks. He lifted up his swimming eyes to heaven, and then casting them down upon us, blessed us with an ardour that spoke the fulness of a heart, lost in devout thankfulness. O little did I think, cried he, of living to see such a happy day as this. My God, I thank thee! and, O bless my benefactors, as they have been the means of blessing me! Here, he took hold of Lucius's hand, and pressed it between his, then raising it up to his lips, I thank you for my dear boy, cried he: I joyfully commit him

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 109

to your care. May it be always his study to deserve your goodness.

HERE the young man, finding his good father make a pause, stepped forwards, and then bowing, Excuse me, Sir, said he, with a tone that seemed to arise from a mixture of timorousness, and a joy too big for utterance, if I want words—to express my thankfulness—for a favour, greater—vastly greater than all my hopes—but—a—my gratitude—my care and my fidelity—shall best thank you: but what return—Here, he made a long pause, and seemed quite lost; when the old man, with a little confusion in his look, cry'd, You see, Sir, the effects of a want of genteel company, my son has no illiberal education, nor does he want either sense or words to express himself, when among people of a lower class, with whom our circumstances have hitherto permitted him only to converse. Lucius smiled, and clapping the youth on the shoulder, with a free and familiar air, said, he would take care to remedy that fault; and this freedom of behaviour seemed to have an immediate effect, for, in an instant, the young man's confusion and disorder seemed to vanish, and being now pretty well assured, prompted by a little female curiosity, I desired him

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him to give us the particulars of his amour with the farmer's daughter. He blushed, and, after a short pause, consented, and, with more assurance, and less hesitation, though not without fear and trembling, gave us the following account.

WHEN I was about eighteen, as I was riding back from watering my master's horses, they took fright ; the horse I rode on, ran away with me, and hastily turning short, thro' a gap in the hedge, threw me. I lay senseless for some time. When I came to myself, I hardly knew what had pass'd, I endeavoured to recollect myself, and looking about to see where I was, immediately cast my eyes on a very agreeable girl, neatly dressed, who was sitting close by me ; she lay half reclined, supporting herself with one hand on the grass, while the other, which was stretched over my breast, held a bottle of salts : but my eyes were hardly open when she arose, and, taking a step or two backwards, with her looks still fixed on me, told me, with an air of great humanity, that she was glad to see me alive, and asked me how I did. I thanked her, and complained of a violent pain in my head ; she was sorry for it, she said, and wished me a good night. I was then sitting up, and seeing her about

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. III

to go, desired her to stay a little, and accept of my company ; but she, modestly, refused me. She told me, she wished me well, and again bid me good night, and, without turning her head, walked away as fast as she could. I still continued sitting in the same posture, when a few drops of blood trickling down my face, I lifted up my hand to wipe them away, and moving it towards the place where I felt the greatest pain, was surprised to find a handkerchief tied round my head, to stop the bleeding of a small wound ; for I was so stunned with the fall, that I never perceived it before. I was pleased with the pretty girl's good nature, and the next Sunday, waiting for her coming out of church, having before got the handkerchief washed, returned it with many thanks. She smiled, and told me I was very little obliged to her, since she did no more for me than what she would have done for any other person, in the same condition ; and very coldly, but civilly, saying, Your servant, turned away to a young woman, and, taking hold of her arm, prevented my saying any more.

POOR man ! said I, laughing, what a disappointment was this ! I suppose you were a little mortified at it. No, Madam, reply'd he ;

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he; indeed, I was not. I had returned the handkerchief, and that was all the view I had in speaking to her. I looked upon her as a deserving girl: and was pleased, that though I had not discharged the obligation, I had paid a debt of honour. Here, observing me smile, Excuse me, Madam, added he, for making use of a word, which, I am sure, does not become the mouth of such a one as me; but, even plowmen know what honour means, and, though they do not make use of the word, observe what is meant by it. Lucius said he was in the right, and desired him to proceed, without minding my looks. On which he returned,

As I had, frequently, an opportunity of seeing her, this calm esteem made me sometimes single her out for conversation. I overtook her, by accident, in the fields, going a milking, I walked her pace, and sometimes, when she was returning back, carried her milk-pail: and, by this means, I, insensibly, learnt from her mind, what I ought to feel in my own. The modest simplicity of her actions, the innocence of her looks, and the goodness of her heart, which was sure to be affected, whenever an object of compassion was near, were those charms, which I could not resist, and they would

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 113

would, indeed, have been too much for me, had her good sense been less remarkable. I was soon convinced that what she had done for me was purely the effect of her good nature. For a long time, she strove to avoid me, so that it was by slow degrees, I learnt her value. She began to have an esteem for me. I thought I deserved no other character than that of her friend; I told her so, and she was not displeased. Innocent in all, she had no idea of love, nor was the name mentioned. At sheep-shearing, at the wakes, and at harvest home, she was constantly invited by my master's daughters, and I joined in the jovial merriment. Our esteem for each other encreased, till, at last, it ripened into love. And, when this was known to ourselves, we were frightened at the difficulties which lay before us; she told me her story, and persuaded me never to see her more.

HER mother, a woman of sense, and very fond of books, took care of her infancy, and gave her too a taste for reading, and embellished her mind with many useful hints, on the excellency of a virtuous character; but she soon died, and left her to the management of a weak and hard-hearted father, who marrying a woman, much younger than himself,

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self, suffered her to be treated with the greatest inhumanity. But, I will not trouble you with the severities she told me she met with, from a wretch of no principles, a cruel step-mother, whose delight it was to give her uneasiness. Her aunt was enraged to see her sister's child treated so ill; she took her home, and it was at her house she lived, when I used to have the pleasure of seeing her. An uncle of hers, who resided in London, has lately left her a hundred pounds, which is all her fortune; for though her father is reckoned to be worth between three and four hundred pounds, she has no expectations from him, as he has now a child by his second wife, who rules him as she pleases.

I HAVE not seen her this month, except at church; but with what reluctance I have submitted to this, no words can express. I thought her above me. I feared to bring upon her the reproaches of her relations, who, to be sure, would never consent to our happiness: to her marrying so poor a man: one so much beneath her. But your generosity, Sir, has removed this obstacle. I am in raptures when I think of it. How shall I express my gratitude? How describe a joy, which no words

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can point ? It is too much ! you are too good, and I am too happy !

WELL, Madam, was I not in the right to represent this innocent youth as a person proper to make a shining figure in a pastoral ? But you see he is above the rank of the Hobbinol of Gay, and would better suit the more dignified character of Pope's, or Philips's, gentle swains, who, with a greater dignity of sentiment, attune the warbling pipe to more lofty, more graceful, and harmonious numbers.

ABOUT an hour after this, the man returned with Clod ; Mr Manly, without the least design of alarming the farmer, had, inadvertently, sent Robin for him ; whom he no sooner set his eyes on, than he recollected that he had seen him before : and being told it was his master that went in to drink with him, after he had bought a load of hay, he was in a most terrible fright : he, therefore, came trembling, and entered the hall, where Mr Manly had seated himself to receive him, with the air of a man going to receive sentence of death, and having made an awkward bow, as he came in, sunk into a corner. He was desired to come forwards, which he did very slowly, looking downwards, and knitting his brows, and then stood

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stood before the awful little man, with a fear that made his lips quiver with a convulsive motion. When he was asked how his wife did, and whether she still continued the same submissive creature, he had represented her; he looked very silly, and, scratching his head, answered, Yes. Then you are your own master, said he again, you are above being ruled by your wife, and, as you make her keep her distance, she must not presume to advise or direct you, in any thing that does not concern her. Yes, was answered again. Then, rejoin'd Lucius, you take the whole blame, and all the guilt, of this affair upon yourself. I find I was mistaken; I thought you might have been teased into it, by the importunity of a wicked woman; a crime that would have admitted of some alleviation, and then, though you would have more weakness, yet you would have less guilt.

THE man stared, and bit his lips, and, at last, stammering, cry'd, But—but—but shu did persuade me to fell the trees, or I had no' done it. Shu does what shu pleases wi' me, and I conno' help it. I thowt no harm.—Thought no harm! cry'd Lucius, what is there no harm in robbing your landlord? Ay, ay, cried the man, there is harm enough in that.

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that. But, I mean, I thowt no harm in telling you such woundy lees about my wife, for I am asheam'd, and wud no' ha' people think me such an old foo; yet I love her for aw that. I find, however, said Lucius, with a magisterial air, your word is not to be taken; but produce your counter-lease. He now pulled it out of his pocket, and, with a look, that shewed him ready to sink with fear, gave it to Lucius, who just cast his eye on the preamble, and returning it, ordered him to read it himself: but that was impossible; for, after he had read two or three short words, and spelt a long one, Lucius observed that his hand shook to such a degree, that he would never be able to go through with it.

I WAS standing all this while in a gallery, that, leading to some chambers, crosses the hall; and, looking very attentively over the iron rails, was listening, and, at the same time, contemplating on my Sancho, seated below me, in his two-arm'd chair; that formidable appearance, which struck such terror into the self-condemned farmer. Just at this time, the venerable old man, whose name I might have told you before is Trueman (but since I tell you so now, it is as well) entered with his son, and looking stedfastly at the far-

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farmer, stepped up to Lucius, and desired to speak a word with him in private. He arose from the seat of justice, and walking aside, they whispered for half a minute, and then the old man, in great haste, ran out of the hall. The judge seemed pleased, gave a nod, which signified a kind of assent, and, returning to his seat, took the lease, and giving it to young Trueman desired him to read it, which he had no sooner done, than Lucius began. Here you find, that you have not only forfeited your lease : but, besides, are to pay me an hundred pounds, over and above the value of the trees you have unlawfully cut down.

At this instant, the gentle Mrs Clod, with a child in her arms, burst into the hall, and, without the least regard to any body present, directed her discourse to her husband. Ah ye foo', ye blockhead, ye ! cried she, as loud as she cou'd bawl : see what you han browt us to. This is yo'r wise doings, ye oaf ye ! Old Clod now looked more aghast than ever, and, with his eyes fixed on his wife, who stood behind him, desired her to hold her tongue : but she, lifting up her fist, replied, with great fury, Hold my tongue, ye villain ! hold my tongue ! See this poor baby : Ye unnatural brute. Yo ha' ruined us aw, ye have ! Clod,

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 119

observing her fist held up in a menacing posture, and hearing these ungrateful sounds, with his head still turned behind him, sidled nearer and nearer to Lucius, as the less terrible object of the two ; who, assuming a most haughty air, commanded her to be silent: at which, she running forwards, and pushing between Lucius and her husband, (when, in an instant, those eyes, which before shot lightning, now let fall a plenteous shower,) blubber'd very dismally, and begged him to pity her, and that poor, pretty, dear, sweet, helpless baby ; and insisted, that though it was no great matter what became of such a wicked man, such a vile rogue, as her husband, yet it would be the greatest cruelty to ruin her, and so fine a child, so sweet a wench, as that she held in her arms. But, alas ! the judge was deaf to all she could say ; he order'd a servant to turn her out of doors ; but she fell on her knees, and, with great earnestness, endeavoured to persuade him to suffer her to stay. This favour, at last, was granted, only upon condition of silence; which was no sooner done, than Clod, seeming to revive and recover spirits from his indignation, cry'd out, I could no' ha' thought it: shu wud ha' me in a jail: well, I'll see who shall suffer ; I ha' ano-

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ther dowter, and her mother wud-na' ha' serv'd me so.

LUCIUS now represented the heinousness of the crime, and insisted upon the penalty: and ordering young Trueman to fill up a bond, which he had before sent for, the farmer signed it with less reluctance than I could have imagined, only repeating a curse or two on his wife, loud enough for her to hear, and crying, I'll be her foo' no longer, I ha' another dowter.

THE filling up of the bond took up some time; for our young steward was not yet very expert at his business, and his father was not there to assist him: but the ceremony of signing and sealing was hardly over, when the good old man entered, introducing an elderly woman, and a very pretty young woman of about seventeen, whom he led to Lucius. Our judge arose, and bow'd, and, at the same instant, farmer Clod cry'd out, My poor dowter! and young Trueman dropp'd an inkstandish, which he was carrying into his office. Clod's wife now gave them all a curse, and grumbling left the place, while he seized one of the girl's hands, and throwing his other arm about her neck, gave her a hearty smack; crying, I am o'most ruined; but no

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 121

matter, I deserve it. Wull yo forgi' me, wench? Yo are my dowter, and yo shall be my dowter, in spite of the devil. Young Trueman had, during this speech, seized her other hand, which Clod had neither power nor resolution to prevent, and which, with an air of native innocence, she cheerfully resigned to her lover. Her eyes were, in an instant, turned from her father, and fix'd, with greater softness, on the young man, who gaz'd on her, with a look of mingled tenderness and rapture.

THIS, Madam, was a scene, which, at first, I could not comprehend, and so strange a turn filled me at once with curiosity, and held me in an agreeable suspense: but it was a curiosity too violent to suffer me to continue, at a distance, an uninterested spectator. I, therefore, ran down stairs, when old Trueman, with the elderly woman, having joined themselves to Lucius, to whom they were talking, and accidentally fronting the other three, I could not help saying, with a laugh, Well, if after all you are disposed for a country dance, I hope, I may be allowed to make one. They all smiled, and, after the usual ceremony, of a few bows and curtesies, and your humble servant, and the

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like, Lucius address'd himself again to Clod.

You have now performed, said he, the conditions I demanded, nor shall I make any reflections on what is pass'd, since this would expose you before your relations. My thoughts are now taken up with the general happiness of your whole family. If I insist'd so strenuously on your paying the fine, it was only with a view, to secure some part of the fortune of a daughter, whom you have neglected; and by giving the bond to this young man, whom you must now look upon as your son, I return it again into the same family, since, as my steward, he does not need this to make him an advantageous match for your daughter. Here Clod, without stirring a step, stretch'd out his neck, to stare at Trueman; and seeming, more and more, to recover himself, drew his daughter back a little, crying, A proper mon; hay, wench. Gi' me yo'r hand; which Trueman doing, he gave it a hearty shake, saying, God bless yo' together. I wish it with aw my heart. Shu is a good wench; I'll say that for her. And then, turning to Lucius, bowed so low, and gave such a scrape, that he had like to have fallen upon his face. The young woman blush'd, and curtesied; and Lucius having, by this time, found the bond,

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bond, which he pulled out of his pocket, presented it to Trueman, saying, Here take this, and I wish you all imaginable happiness; while he received it with a look of gratitude and joy. Lucius resumed, I am sensible that what you told me was in confidence: I, therefore, remit of the rigour of my first demand. I return you your counter-lease, and shall sell the trees myself; I only desire you to set the same number of plants in their room. Ay, marry wull I (cried he, as he received it) and as many more to boot, and rot me if ever shu mak me such a rogue again. Now nothing was heard, but joy and congratulations. The young woman's aunt (for that was the person that came in with her) as she loved her niece, was very liberal of her thanks and acknowledgments; she kissed the young couple, and insisted on providing the wedding dinner, as soon as they could be asked in due form at church. For, as she was no friend to licenses, she was resolved that the marriage should not be performed till after this ceremony was compleated, which she thought necessary to render it valid. The happy couple were the least tumultuous in their joy, for that was principally expressed, on both sides, by the eloquent language of the coun-

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tenance, which, sufficiently, told us all they could have uttered ; and, perhaps, they chose that we should rather see than hear the expressions of their mutual tenderness : but it is more probable, that, wholly taken up with the presence of each other, they never thought of us at all, and, while they were silent, did not suspect that any in the company could understand a language, which they, doubtless, imagined peculiar to themselves. But it was not so with old Clod, who knew no other way of expressing his joy, than by capering about the hall, blessing the squire and his good lady, kissing his daughter, and hugging young Trueman. In short, we adjourned into a parlour ; when wine, ale, and tea, were called for, which every one partook of as they pleased. Nor was the cold sir-loin forgot, which, by antient custom, is a joint devoted to hospitality ; for this was placed on a side-board, near the farmer, whose uneasiness having cost him a dinner, he wisely, upon the return of his spirits and his stomach, did not suffer it to stand neglected. At last, they all took their leave, but not till our young steward had shewn his intended bride her future apartment, which Lucius, in the presence of the aunt, promised should

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 125

should be immediately furnished for their reception.

YOU see, Madam, that innocence and peace do not always bless the cottage: vice sometimes finds an entrance under the lowest roof; and care and sorrow can hover over the brow of humble virtue. With these sage remarks, which inform you of nothing but what you knew before, I conclude my letter, having no more to add, but that I am, and shall ever be,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

most affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

P. S. Upon recollection, I think, I ought not to have informed you, that the wicked woman, who makes no inconsiderable character in the above letter, is a step-mother: but surely you will not do me the injury to suspect that, by inserting it, I would insinuate a reflection upon others, who, with the name, have quite different dispositions. A certain lady, whom you dearly love, and to whom your cousin owes ten thousand obligations, is a glorious exception; and I know some other ladies, besides Miss Biddy, who, from a mother-in-law, have received all the tender indul-

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gences, and all the obligations they could reasonably expect from a real parent. If you shew your aunt this letter, as I find you have done some others, don't let her overlook this postscript.

LETTER XXXV.

DEAR MADAM,

YOU see what a variety of impertinencies, your desire of frequently hearing from me, has forced me to commit; but what else can be expected from rural scenes, which, though the haunt of lovers, are the most unfruitful of intrigues: for where almost every one acts from nature, nothing of the marvellous can be expected. Yet I shall now open a scene of wonders, that will give you the greatest astonishment.

ONE day last week, to our no small surprise, we received a pressing invitation to dine with Mr Stevens, the sprightly old gentleman, whose * character you were so well pleased with, and whom we had not seen, since the disgrace of his superlatively pious sister† Prudilla. Our desire of renewing the acquaint-

* See Letter IV. Letter VIII. † Letter XIX.

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 127

ance of so agreeable a companion, made us readily comply with his request. Lucius, therefore, ordered the coach to be immediately got ready, and we set out soon after.

UPON our arrival, we were received by the gentleman himself, with his usual affability and freedom ; but with less of that humorous gaiety in his look, which indicates the friend, and chearful companion. After paying us some handsome, tho' late, compliments on our nuptials, he informed us, that his sister, who, he confessed, had injured us in his esteem, being now dangerously ill of a consumption, desired to see us, that she might unburthen her mind, as much as possible, by confessing her guilt, and endeavouring to obtain our pardon ; and that, as she was now awake, if we pleased, he would introduce us himself. We immediately consented, and followed him to her chamber. We found her seated in an easy chair, one arm hanging negligently down by the side, which, by its thinness, seemed immoderately long. She was worn to a skeleton ; her head leaning back, in a languid posture, discovered a thin, pale, and dejected countenance, which, the moment she raised it, expressed all the signs of inward confusion, horror, and guilt. She fixed her eyes on us, sighed, and

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waving her hand, desired us, with a weak voice, to sit down by her, which we immediately did; when Mr Stevens left us, and, before he shut the door, assured his sister, that he would take care that no body should come to interrupt us.

WHAT an object wss here ! How wretchedly depraved must that mind be, that could triumph before an enemy so reduced, so humble, and so worthy of pity ! Lucius could not : his concern was extremely visible, and, though I never saw him in a more sprightly humour, than he was in, the whole morning, it was now instantly vanished ; and his countenance had an air of solemn gravity, and compassion. With a tone of great humanity, heask'd how she did. She, thanking him, answered, I am extremely ill. O, Sir, I am going—I am going to that being, who will not be imposed upon by false appearances. Oh the horrors of a guilty mind ! Oh conscience ! Conscience !—I have plotted your ruin—I have endeavoured to destroy your peace—your fortune—your happiness here—your soul hereafter. Then, wiping her eyes, Oh, I ask your pardon,—Can you forgive me ? Can you ?—Will you ? This was spoke with such a beseeching look, and uttered with so much earnestness,

ness, that it would have been barbarous to have kept her any longer in suspense. Lucius, therefore, immediately reply'd, in that tender tone, which nature gives to the voice, when the heart is deeply affected with compassion, Yes, Madam, I heartily forgive you: But why this eagerness? Do you think me incapable of pity? No, Sir, added she, I know you are not: but alas! you know not what you say!—You don't know how much I have been your enemy—but don't—don't withdraw your forgiveness, continued she, looking steadfastly in his face; and then casting her eyes on the ground, added: It was I that caused your father to be arrested: It was I—I that persuaded his creditors to throw him in a jail. How! cry'd Lucius, reddening; and then, after a moment's reflexion, resumed with a sigh; Well! this is not a time for reproaches. Reproaches! cry'd she; I deserve them all—I know I deserve them all, and am prepared to receive them. O Madam! I loved Lucius, with a criminal passion, and, under a veil of sanctity, thought to conceal myself from the eyes of the world; but I could not do it from the all-piercing eye of heaven.—But my plots were discovered, and you were a witness of the shameful, but just, treatment I met with,

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at your aunt's, when all my contrivances to break the match betwixt you and this gentleman were laid open. Your aunt's reproaches sharpened the sting of my guilty conscience; your and your cousin's triumph over me, made my mind boil with rage and shame, and disappointed love. I returned home,—I contrived ways of revenge, and sought still to destroy your peace. At last, I thought of Mr Manly. I knew some of his creditors, I flew to them, and, under a pretence of visiting their wives, indulged the malice of this wicked heart. This, at first, was all my view: but soon, Madam, I recollected that your husband had a tender and generous mind: I hoped his duty, and his affection, to his father, would be too strong for his passion for you—I hoped he would relieve him, and I was not deceived: I prepared to let your father know that he was an impostor, that he had greatly lessened his fortune: and, by this means, thought myself again infallibly certain of breaking the match: but soon I learned that these hopes were vain: Lucius had himself informed him of the whole affair:—he was forgiven, and I plunged in fresh despair.—O Lucius! I durst not now see your father.—Oh a guilty conscience! a guilty conscience!—Crime followed crime, till I sinned
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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 135

yond all hopes of mercy. 'Tis an ingenuous confession, however, cry'd Lucius, and I heartily forgive you.—May God forgive you too. I'll promise for my father. I thank you, said she, and stopp'd, and then continuing silent for some time, she, at last, fixed her eyes on Lucius, and resumed. I have another affair, but I cannot mention it to you.—I cannot speak of it—but, as it is more necessary to be discovered than any thing I have yet said, I have wrote it down.—Here look at this paper—read my shame, and then let me speak to you alone. You will know it time enough, Madam. I can scarcely think of it before you, and must, therefore, beg you to retire.

You won't wonder, Madam, that I was very much surprized at this proposal, which appeared the more extraordinary, by her manner of introducing it. What could I think? It had an odd appearance. Lucius seemed thoroughly sensible of this, and, therefore, endeavoured to detain me. This is very strange, cried he: What concern can I have in any secret affair of yours, which my Felicia may not be acquainted with? Or, what can that be, which is fit only for me, and not for her to know? Dear Madam, dear Sir, oblige me, cried she, with an earnestness that pleaded
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more than her words: surely this request cannot be hard for you to grant! Lucius made no answer, but, receiving the paper, went to the window to read it. As she sat with her back to the light, he might do it as safely here as in another room, without raising her blushes, by the disorder of his looks; and, perhaps, her chair was set in this manner on purpose. Mean while I arose, and walking out of the room, pulled the door after me, which I had hardly done, when I heard Lucius stamp, and cry out, I a child by you, Madam, 'tis false. 'Tis a notorious lye. And then, running to the door, desired me to come in, with a look that shewed him in a most violent passion. It seems, added he, that this important affair, so improper for you to hear, is what you have an immediate concern in; she has the impudence to say here—but read it yourself. What a vile scandalous lye.—I a child by her!

As I was but just on the outside of the door, when he called me, I immediately returned; and, being much less disturbed than he, had the precaution to shut it, as I entered the room. I must confess that I was in a very queer situation of mind: I was far from being easy. But it is impossible for me to give you any idea of Lucius's behaviour: he stamp-

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 133

ed, he stared, his colour changed from a deep scarlet, to a livid paleness; and then looking towards the chair, with rage and contempt strongly painted in his countenance, Is this your repentance? cried he, wicked and abandoned wretch!—In such a condition too!—Your affectation of modesty!—my wife must not know it!—you can't speak of it before her! Why so warm, my dear? replied I, with a smile: if there is nothing in it, it can only serve to encrease our detestation of a wretch that, so near her death, could be guilty of so vile a slander. *If!* cried he, with a snappish hastiness: It is an absolute lye—she is the last woman that I would be guilty of such an affair with—such an antidote to desire!—I should be as much ashamed of my taste as of the crime.

WE were now alarmed by an affair of a very different kind; for Prudilla, who had heard every word, unable to support the shock of being treated in so severe a manner, at this instant, fainted away, and fell out of her chair, and we beheld a pale, and almost lifeless being, lie stretched out on the hearth, in a manner that called for immediate relief. To what strange revolutions is the human mind subject! Not all our indignation,

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not all the fury of passion, could prevent our running immediately to her assistance, and giving her that succour that her case required. Lucius raised her head from under the grate, where she was in danger of being burnt, and, with my assistance, lifted her into her chair, and there held her, whilst I ran to call her brother. He came ; but it was near half an hour before we brought her to herself. At last, she opened her eyes, and her brother forced her to drink a glass of wine and hartshorn ; but she no sooner recovered her spirits, than she burst into tears ; nor could she utter any thing, but sighs, for a considerable time, endeavouring all the while to conceal her blushes, by covering her face. At last, she desired her brother to leave us, and, when he was gone, not a word was spoke for near two minutes more. For she was so weak, that Lucius, dreading some ill consequence might again attend his not being able to master his temper, resolved to let her begin first ; and to wait, with patience, till he could hear what she had to say, in vindication of this *notorious lye*, as he called it. This he let me know, as soon as Mr Stevens left the room ; by writing his resolution on a piece of paper, which he easily did, as there was a pen and ink upon a table, which

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 135

stood close at his elbow. I began to be tired of this suspense, when she began, with a deep sigh : Now you know my shame ; but I did not think I should be treated in this manner. Oh you are very cruel, you might have read the paper out.—Is it not false? cried Lucius ; had you ever a child by me?—Pray let me go on, said she, you ought, indeed, to have read the paper out, before you fell into such a passion.——Did not I read one lye at the beginning? interrupted he again ; to what purpose should I read on to find more? Hear me, hear me, rejoined she, I take the shame and guilt upon myself, why should you not then hear me? You lay at our house, about two years ago, twice you lay here; if you remember, it rained, and you could not go home. Oh! how shall I tell the rest? You was waked by a woman in your bed. Lucius blushed, and looked at me, and immediately replied, I acknowledge it, Madam; but proceed. I left you while you were asleep.—I was gone before it was light, and the first time you lay here, you found our chambermaid's handkerchief lying by the side of the bed, which, the next morning, she owned. The odiousness of my crime made me glad to conceal it; I blushed at my own wicked-

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ness, and, to preserve my character, left the handkerchief.

I own it all, Madam, cried Lucius ; and I sincerely beg your pardon. Indeed, I ought not to have been so warm : but I beg you would forgive a language, which, I acknowledge, did not become me. My suspicion fell where you intended it should ; but how barbarous, how ungenerous, was it in you, to sully the character of an innocent creature, by laying your guilt to her charge ! If that be so great a fault, returned she, I have much to answer for : Oh I am a guilty creature ! but the shame I then felt for my faults, though it prompted me to do all I could to hide them, though it made me blush in private, and almost hate myself, was nothing to the horror I now feel. Pray, Madam, said I, proceed with your story, I long to hear what is become of the child. Lucius, Madam, may remember, continued she, that I went to London, about four months after the last time he lay at our house ; there, instead of visiting my friends, I lived very retired, and, pretending that my husband was gone abroad, was well respected, and, at last, brought to bed of a fine girl. After my return home, I sent for it into the country, and it is now at Clifton, where

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 137

where it passes for the child of a poor woman, whom I had taken a fancy to, and resolved to keep out of charity. In that paper is a direction where to find it, and in that paper too, you will see that I have left this living witness of my shame seven thousand pounds, which is all my fortune; and if she dies, it is to be equally divided between you and my brother: for you are the person I love dearest, and have most injured. But my brother will show you my will; he has consented to every thing, and, therefore, I have chosen him and you for my executors.—But I am quite spent—I hope I shall see you after dinner.—This we promised, and retired.

I DON'T know, Madam, whether I can vindicate to myself, my thus laying open a secret affair, that reflects so much upon the character of my dear Lucius. How triumphantly you cry out, O the man of immaculate virtue, the modest, the sober, the religious Lucius!—in bed with a superannuated old maid—mighty pretty, who could have thought it?—But, however you exclaim, I know you will be pleased, to find him a little lower in your esteem; or else what is become of all your pretty hints, “that he was too good to be married—that you should not like a husband

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“ band so extremely perfect—and that you
 “ thought it necessary that a man, who was to
 “ be your companion for life, should have
 “ some faults, that he might be better able to
 “ excuse yours.”—Think of this, and cease
 your exclamations. As to Prudilla’s conduct,
 it is vastly more inexcuseable: but I consider
 her as an humble penitent, and, therefore, shall
 not expatiate on her crimes. I have been
 melted by her tears; I have heartily forgiven
 her, and this has made me omit several speech-
 es, which had I inserted, though they might
 have kept up the enthusiastic part of her cha-
 racter, would have weakened your pity, by
 making her appear ridiculous.

I HAVE the honour to be, Madam,

YOUR LADYSHIP’S

most sincere,

and most affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

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LETTER XXXVI,

DEAR MADAM,

WE had staid so long with Prudilla, that, when we went down, we found the dinner almost spoiled; for Mr Stevens, imagining that this might be the last time of our seeing her alive, was not willing to interrupt us, being very sensible that we had affairs upon our hands of much greater moment.

THE cloth was no sooner taken away, than Mr Stevens, having lighted his pipe, addressed himself to Lucius, and told him, that his sister had desired him to shew him the will, before it was sealed up. You know already, I suppose, said he, that you and I are appointed her executors, and I don't doubt but she has told you in what manner she has disposed of her fortune. Tell me now honestly, don't you think my sister out of her senses? Self-interest, perhaps, may bias me, but you are an unprejudiced person: therefore, let me know what you think of her leaving seven thousand pound to a stranger. Had she left it to a female friend, to you, or any other man of merit, I should not have cared, I would not have troubled myself at its going out of the family; but to leave it to a
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little brat, that can but just go alone—Pox! it's enough to make one mad. Here he began to puff, as if he had a mind to smother us, and, in an instant, we were surrounded with a cloud of smoke. Lucius seemed extremely confounded; when, to give him time to think of a proper answer, I replied, She has taken a fancy to the child, I suppose; perhaps, it may belong to somebody very dear to her. A fancy! Madam, cried he, it is a very odd fancy, that she, who never in her life could endure children, should, at these years, take such a fancy to one, as to leave it all she is worth. I, very bluntly, told her so, and, as I refused to have any thing to do in this affair, without better reasons than she was pleased to yield me, she referred me to you, to give me satisfaction. That I can easily do, said Lucius; you are her brother, and have a right to know the whole affair, which I, though most concerned, was ignorant of, till this morning: Suppose the child should be her own. Why ay, cry'd the old man, after a short silence, and then deliberately, pouring out a mighty cloud, which he had been collecting from the time Lucius began to speak—there is something in that, indeed: but how could she, who is so cursed modest, that she could not mention it to her own brother—

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 141

ther, tell it you? Who should she tell it to, but to the child's father, said I? The child's father! he rejoined, holding his pipe in his hand, and staring, with a look of the utmost astonishment; what Lucius the child's father! he! the modest Lucius! my young philosopher! he make a whore of my sister! Do you know, young man, added he, what you deserve, for doing our family this honour? Suppose I should order my fellows to cool your courage in the horse-pond, should not I serve you right? Hay, tell me that, you young dog? Could you find no body, but my sister, to make a whore of? A woman old enough to be your mother, ye little whelp! So you must come here preaching your damned nonsense, about virtue, and honour, and the devil knows what; and I, like an old fool, must sit listening and hugging you to my bosom, while you, forsooth, was only waiting for an opportunity to debauch my sister. Here he started up, crying the horse-pond! Ay, and it shall be the horse-pond, if it costs me a thousand pounds. By the lord Harry, I'll make a fous'd mackrel of him.

LUCIUS, who, at first, sat with a kind of pusillanimous shame, as, perhaps, imagining, that as Mr Stevens thought him the aggressor, he

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he had an undoubted right to complain; now started from his chair, and stepping between him and the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket; then, turning hastily round, and clapping his hand to his sword, which he drew half out of the scabbard, he cried, Hold, Sir, I shall take upon me to secure the door; you must not go out, without my leave; how far I have injured either you or your sister, she may, if she pleases, inform you; for, I think it beneath me to palliate any fault of mine, by laying it upon her. This was spoke in a resolute tone; but, the old man, not seeming to mind what he said, having his whole thoughts taken up with his posture, cried out, There is a young philosopher now! A pretty fellow to make me a prisoner in my own house; and then, casting his eyes on the glittering steel, Well done, Don John! There is a dog for you now! He has lain with the sister, and now would murder the brother! A fine philosopher!—But I won't draw—I'll ha' none of your cold iron in my guts—I'd see both you and sister at old Nick first.—Then wheeling about upon his heel, he added,—You shall as soon roast as spit me.

THE moment Lucius ran to the door, I flew to the window, and throwing open
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the sash, call'd Robin and John: but hearing the old man declare his aversion to cold iron, I drew in my head, and was going to shut the window, when he came to me, and putting out his head, first threw away his pipe, and then called out Sam and Harry: but we both called in vain; for, as we found afterwards, they were all drinking together in the cellar, with the butler. I was, all this while, fretting, trembling, and blaming myself, as the cause of all this disturbance, by the imprudent manner in which I had discovered the affair; and was the more uneasy, as I thought Lucius had sufficient reason to be offended: and this reflection was so painful, that, stupid with vexation, for some time I had not the power of contriving any probable means of setting all right again. At last, I recollected the paper which Prudilla had given to Lucius, and he to me; and, as the old man was still leaning upon my shoulder, and calling for his servants, I desired him to be pacified, and told him that, on condition he would sit down and be easy, I would convince him that Mr. Manly was much less to blame than he imagined. Mr. Stevens, finding that it was to no purpose to expect any assistance from his servants, readily complied; and, seating himself

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in the window, while Lucius took a chair next the door, I gave him the paper, saying, Here, Sir, is a short account of the whole affair, written by her own hand. He took it, and mumbling to himself, utter'd now and then an articulate sound, making his remarks to himself as he went on. *Blushes*—*die with shame*—and then, raising his voice, *Be surpris'd to hear that you have had a child by me*—Be surpris'd to hear it! cry'd he. What the duce! did he get her with child in his sleep!—*remember*—*asleep*—Ay, it must be so.—Here he burst out a laughing, crying, Well, this is very extraordinary!—Get a child in his sleep!—No, that can't be it nither; for she says, *he remember'd it*. Well, let's see, O, I have it; *a woman came to bed to him in his sleep*—Ay, that may be; but she did not get him with child, I hope—*Early in the morning*—*dark*—The duce! what a rare modest sister I have got! Well, it can't be help'd. Why, now I ought, like an ass, to ask his pardon. Faith, I should not have wonder'd if he had sworn a rape against her—*The handkerchief*—O the sly devil!—and so he was to suspect Jenny Law, as pretty a girl as any in the parish.

HERE, tearing the paper, he went to Lucius,

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 145

cious, crying, at every step, I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon with all my heart. Odsso, what a racket have I been making in vindication of the honour of my sister, when her honour is not worth a button!

THEY now shook hands, and, in a few minutes, were as good friends as if nothing had happened. Prudilla had dined in her chamber, and afterwards laid down for about an hour; and then sent to inform us, that she should be glad of our company. She now look'd much better than when we enter'd the room before; notwithstanding her having, since that time, suffer'd a very great expence of spirits. This might be occasioned by her having now no more painful secrets to disclose. Her countenance was tolerably serene; and, tho' she could not look upon us without confusion, it was a confusion unmix'd with that ghastly horror which before gave an additional wanness to her discolour'd cheeks and lips. She was rising as we enter'd the room; and, as she took the same seat, we took ours. After enquiring how she did, and particularly, whether she had received any hurt from her fall from the chair, which she assured us she had not, she began:

I HAVE now discovered my shame to you both;

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both ; and, whatever you think of me, I desire you would not, when I am gone, expose me amongst my friends. I have now little else to do, but to prepare for that other world, to which I am hastening. Death is a dreadful stroke, but I must go thro' it. It is guilt, it is guilt that makes it terrible.—I am very loth to die.—It will be your duty, Sir, to take care of this child.—I am very sensible, that the dear infant has no right to any part of the fortune you obtained by your marriage with this lady, and therefore I give her mine.—To speak my mind freely, it is with great uneasiness that I support the thought of leaving her to such an atheist as you. My religious principles are very different from yours ; or, rather, I question whether you have any religion at all. However, you are a moral man ; and if mere morality would save you, you bid fairer than most others for happiness. The morality of the best is imperfect ; and, therefore, not fit to justify us in the sight of God.—But, alas ! why do I talk of morality ! I, that build all my hopes on your doing justice to my child, in giving her, if not religious, at least, virtuous principles, drawn from this morality ! I, who have so heinously sinned, that I hardly durst hope for mercy. I, that have abused all
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the good sense that God has given me, and behaved like one that had never tasted of the sweetness of his grace! Oh! I feel the corruptness of my own heart. I was surely born in sin, and in iniquity did my mother conceive me. I am sensible that my own righteousness is but as filthy rags.

It was now impossible for me, Madam, to forbear smiling. I could not help giving my assent to these last words, and saying, to myself, that I believed so too. Lucius kept his countenance pretty well: he heard himself loaded with abundance of religious abuse, without the least discomposure in his look: he shook his head, listen'd still with pity in his eyes, and never once attempted to interrupt her. After a good deal more to the same purpose, she let us know that she had had a pious education, and a very early experimental sense of religion. That, as she was converted sometimes, as she thought then, though now she doubted it, she had always a great abhorrence of vice; but grew proud of her religious attainments; and this, added to a temper naturally peevish, made her censorious. At last she loved Lucius; she struggled against her weakness; she represented to herself the difference of their age, and the little probability,

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that he would marry a woman twenty years older than himself; however, she strove to allure him by her behaviour; but it was all in vain: she then chang'd her conduct, her passion became criminal; and, after a struggle between that and her conscience, flatter'd herself, that, as she had such proof of her being one of the elect, it was impossible she should ever be a cast-away, and, confiding in this, she resolv'd to give way to her passion: she then drank in iniquity like water; and going on, from one crime to another, sinn'd beyond all hopes of mercy. Poor Lucius was the cause of all: had she never known him, she might have still been virtuous: but love made her commit what her conscience condemn'd.—She could not bear her own reflections; she, therefore, endeavour'd to conceal her actions from the light, from herself, from him, from the world.

THIS, Madam, is the substance of a very long discourse, of which I was heartily weary; nor should I trouble you with it, if it did not seem necessary to give you a portrait of her mind, and to let you see how far even religion, when rais'd upon false principles, had an influence in corrupting her heart. It was a gloomy system, collected from abstruse passages
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in scripture, in opposition to the plainest ; big with absurdity, contradiction, and blasphemy ; contrary to every sentiment we can form of the Deity, as a wise and good being, and to the plainest dictates of unprejudiced reason.

LUCIUS did not chuse to make any answer to this fine harangue, which she did not conclude without giving him some exhortations to repentance : and, indeed, she had drawn it out to such a length, and her spirits were so exhausted, that she was obliged, immediately after, to lie down : we therefore took our leave, promising to see her again in two or three days time. We drank tea with Mr Stevens, who behaved in the most friendly manner. The will was read, and he had now no objection to being his sister's executor.

WE had scarcely drove from the door, when I observed that Lucius appeared extremely thoughtful. We were now free from company, and perhaps he might dread lest I should take hold of this first opportunity, to make him some reproaches : but I was resolved to disappoint him. He watch'd my looks ; he eyed me very attentively from time to time, and seem'd desirous of divining my thoughts, while, with a modest diffidence in his countenance, he seem'd to wait till I began the disagreeable

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Subject. I believe we had been full five minutes in the coach without speaking a word to each other : at last, I began with asking him, what were his thoughts of Prudilla. I hardly know, said he, what to think of her ; she has confessed herself guilty of very black crimes. Could I have consented to conceal my father's misfortunes, I had been justly punish'd. I must have been ruin'd. What would your father have thought of me ? It is very true, said I, it was an infernal scheme ; the very idea of it makes me tremble. It was happy for me, that your generous sentiments, which would not suffer you to conceal it, broke all her measures. But the child—added I, smiling : why I am made a mother, at a time when I least thought of it. But did your suspicions fall where she intended they should ? Yes, my dear, said he, giving me a most affectionate look, that seem'd to thank me for treating him so gently ; I return'd the handkerchief, which the young woman received, indeed, without a blush : this I perfectly remember. I had never taken notice of her before ; and methought she had, with a very agreeable person, an innocence and modesty in her behaviour, which I could not tell how to reconcile with the character of a lascivious wanton.

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ton. I reflected on what I had done; and reflection brought a number of ideas to my mind, that were by no means pleasing. However, I had the honest satisfaction of thinking that I was not her corrupter; and this thought blunted the sharpness of self-reproach. I look'd upon her ruin as almost irreparable; and painted to myself, in the strongest colours, the unhappy situation of a girl abandon'd to the indulgence of disgraceful appetites, lost to all sense of real virtue and honour, and in the direct road to infamy and misery. I pitied her, and resolv'd to endeavour, at least, to reclaim her. I found her one day alone, and, seizing the opportunity, I began a lecture on incontinency—O hideous! interrupted I; a pretty gentleman to preach to a girl on that subject!—the supposed partner in her guilt too!—why, I wonder how you could have the confidence to open your mouth about it.—The most improper person!—No, my dear, return'd Lucius, with a smile, I must differ from you: for supposing her the person, I can't help, even now, thinking myself the most proper man in the world. However, it was with much difficulty, that I brought myself to form the resolution, and with more still, that I put it in practice. I thought it my duty, in a pe-

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culiar manner, and encouraged myself with the pleasing prospect of saving a very agreeable girl from ruin. But, when I had this opportunity, I knew not how to begin. I was ashamed of appearing more virtuous than her, and reproaching her for an action, which she, I imagin'd, thought I ought rather to thank her for. These last reflections held me for some time silent; but, at last, I boldly began, with observing that a girl, so agreeable in her person, and, to outward appearance, so modest and prudent, seem'd form'd by nature for happiness: and that it was a pity, that, with so many perfections, she should destroy all her hopes of enjoying the pleasures of an innocent love, all her prospects of a happy marriage; lose the eternal rewards of heaven, and inconsiderately plunge herself in ruin and infamy. She interrupted me, by telling me she was surpris'd to hear me talk in this manner, and wonder'd what I would be at. I then began to tell her that I was a partner in her guilt; and that, tho' I had not the resolution to withstand the temptation, yet my conscience reproach'd me for what I had done; and I sincerely repented of my folly: let me persuade you, said I. — She stared; — she believed

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believed I was mad;—she flew out of the room, and I—look'd like a fool.

I BELIEVE so, reply'd I, bursting into a laugh. Poor girl! I pity her. I only with Prudilla had overheard you. But, I hope, the natural innocence of her behaviour cured this groundless suspicion. In a great measure it did, returned he; notwithstanding it was reasonable to suppose that a girl, who took such precaution as to come and go away in the dark, and who, all the time she was with me, never spoke louder than a whisper, would strenuously deny a fact, which she took such pains to conceal: I was not, therefore, perfectly satisfied.—But I can't help thinking, now I know her innocent, in how ridiculous a light I must then appear to her. Two or three months after, I lay there again; I took the precaution to lock my door, but I had not been an hour in bed, when I met with the same temptation, which, in spite of all my previous resolutions, again proved too strong for me. Thus, perfectly convinced of my own weakness, I resolved never to lie another night in the same house. But whenever I went there, I took particular notice of the young woman's complexion, as well as of her shape: and in six or eight months time,

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observing no marks of her pregnancy, I grew perfectly easy with respect to her, and began to blame myself for my unjust suspicions; though I was still at a loss where to fix them. Indeed, my dear, continued he, I can't help thinking Prudilla committed a greater crime, in thus endeavouring to ruin the reputation of a modest girl, by loading her with all the infamy of her own guilt, than in the very actions that gave occasion to it. How depraved must have been her mind! How lost to every generous and humane sentiment!——But 'tis happy for her, that she has had time to correct the irregularities of her passions. Censoriousness, inhumanity, and the indulgence of every selfish passion, are the natural consequences of her sentiments of religion; a religion, which, respecting only God, regards every duty to man as low and contemptible: but so deeply are the kind affections imprinted on the heart; so lovely does virtue, humanity, and generosity appear to all mankind; that, however the minds of individuals are warped by selfish views, they cannot help secretly approving this temper in others: and, even those of her sentiments, however contemptibly they speak of it, generally shew by their actions, that they have the same obligations to nature, the same

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same impulses to goodness, with the rest of mankind: so that, however pernicious their religious sentiments may appear, with respect to their tendency, it very rarely happens that they have really such unhappy, such horrid effects.

BUT I will trouble you no longer, Madam, with the repetition of a conversation, which begins to grow but little interesting. You will, I fancy, readily believe that I am now sufficiently weary; for this is as true as that I am

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

constant friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXVII.

YOU find, Madam, by my two last letters, that I am arrived at the unexpected honour of being a step-mother: but whether I shall behave in such a manner as to support my new dignity, with any degree of applause to myself, is a circumstance that I cannot yet be sure of. However, of this I am certain, that I was never in my life half so an-

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gry as I am now at our writers of plays, novels, and romances, for continually drawing a step-mother as a monster in nature; and so terrible a creature, that one would be apt to conceive that she had not one feature, that, in the least, resembled any part of a human being. And, indeed, in all my reading, which, in this way, is pretty extensive, I can hardly recollect above one or two instances, in which this inexorable tyrant had the least advantage above a tiger, a wolf, or a crocodile. That a bad woman should make a bad wife, and a worse step-mother, is not to be wondered at; especially, if coveteousness, pride, ill-nature, and an extraordinary fondness for her own children, center in the same breast! But while there are such persons in the world as your ever honoured aunt, it must be convinced, that an empty name can never change the disposition of the heart, and turn the most mild, the tenderest and most generous minds into savage cruelty. By her example, Madam, I intend to regulate my conduct; and while I strive to imitate so fine a model, I must be a wretched copieft, indeed, if I myself am not tolerably perfect.

LUCIUS seems extremely pleased at my manner of treating him, and a thousand times
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has he already thanked me, by his looks, and the most engaging expressions of tenderness. Two days after this day of wonders, we went to pay another visit to Prudilla. I was desirous of seeing the child, and easily imagined, that though Lucius was perfectly silent on this head, he could not avoid being much more so, though his fear of offending me might make him conceal it. As Mr Stevens had torn the paper, which contained a detail of his sister's guilt, we had lost the direction where to find the little creature, whom I now began to consider as one of the family. I, therefore, the evening before, proposed his sending a servant, with a letter, to give them notice when we intended to see them, and to desire that the infant might be brought to their house. Lucius readily embraced this proposal, and with a look, that seemed to speak much more than he expressed, seized hold of my hand, and thanked me for the care I took to anticipate his desires.

THE next morning we set out pretty early; and, upon our arrival, Mr Stevens, handing me out of the coach, conducted us in, when he must needs salute me, under the character of his sister, not in law, said he, but against law; however, you are my sister, and you shall

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shall be my sister. I hope, added he, you have heartily forgiven the penitent above stairs; if you have, you must let us see it, by taking care of her child: and, by this means, you will greatly oblige, not only me, your brother, and the bantling's uncle and guardian, but, our good friend, my young philosopher there the baby's pappa, whom, let me tell you, it is your duty to oblige.

O, Sir, said I, I will not dispute with you about a name. If you can prove that you are any way related to me, I shall certainly esteem it an honour. As to the child, I can make no promises, I assure you: I can only say, that I will do my endeavour, at least; and, though not from dull duty, I shall, from affection, a much more engaging motive, strive to contribute to the satisfaction of one, who is nearer than a brother.

You are very good, Madam, replied he, smiling; but, as to the honour of being related to me, (in this manner I mean) I must confess that it is but very little. The poor brat, it must be acknowledged, is base-born; and, therefore, you are no more its mother-in-law, than I am your brother-in-law: I mean by the law of the land. By the laws of nature and reason, indeed, you are much

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more nearly related; for, as this gentleman's wife, you are as much the mother of this child, as if it had been born in marriage: for his marriage, with my sister, would not make the child more his than it is at present, and, consequently, your duty is, in both cases, the same.

I AM quite of your mind, Sir, said I: but where is this little creature? methinks, I long to be acquainted with any new charge. We shall have the young flut here by and by, replied he; and then added gravely, But what is the matter with Lucius? See how thoughtful he looks—why, I profess, he has all the father in his face.—It is written on his forehead. He has one child now, which, three days ago, I dare say he never so much as dreamed of, and, if I guess right, in three months or so he will have another. Is it not true, Madam? No wonder then that he has the look of a patriarch.—But, I hope, he has not lost his speech!

No, no, Sir, said Lucius, with a smile; I have been listening very attentively to you, and, at the same time, admiring the goodness of a lady that derives fresh charms from my guilt and folly. Nay, nay, cried he, there is no wonder that you should not find an opportunity,

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nity to put in a single word, when a talkative old fellow, and a very fine lady, seem resolved to have all the discourse to themselves: when this is the case, you are too wise not to know that the most complaisant thing the husband can do, is not to interrupt them.—But is she so very good? why then, I suppose, you have not had so much as a curtain lecture on this affair. Far from it, I assure you, replied Lucius. Then she is a dear, sweet, little angel, cried the old man; ay, and a goddess too; and—an—an—I don't know what to call her; I can't think of a name half good enough. I could almost find in my heart, to ravish a kiss from her for it: only I am afraid that it will be a little unreasonable that both should suffer a rape from our family. Let me tell you, Madam, that you are happy, in having an opportunity to shew a greatness of mind, that must for ever endear you to a man of sense. But whatever you are in reality, you are not to appear to the world in the character of a step-mother; the infant must be brought up as the child of a deceased friend, relation or so; or, if Lucius will consent to it, let her be put under the care of his mother, and Marilla. This, Madam, will ease you of a considerable part of the care of your office,

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fice, and, at the same time, you will have an opportunity of seeing her as often as you please.

LUCIUS readily approved of this motion, and I as readily agreeing to it, it was resolved, that Sophronia, Lucius's mother, should be informed, by Mr Stevens, of the whole affair. This being immediately determined, he resumed, There are many advantages which will attend your concealing the truth from the world ; besides the single consideration of the reputation of the two families. You would, in some sense, be regarded by the world, as a step-mother : and though they would, doubtless, be ready to make some allowance in consideration of the slut's being base-born ; yet the very name itself is generally here, in the country, the cause of discontent, and frequent uneasiness. It is an unthankful office. Every body takes pains to render her suspected by the little brats ; they, without thought, are industrious to weaken her authority, by sowing, in their unthinking minds, the seeds of jealousy, distrust, and a spirit of contradiction. And let her be ever so good, let her have ever such an affection for the children, the slightest correction, the most gentle reproof, is aggravated into the most insupportable

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able tyranny ; every old woman in the parish bemoans their hard fate, and let the urchins be guilty of ever so great a crime, they can't whimper, but the simple, well-meaning neighbours cry out, Ah, poor souls, if their own mother was alive, they would not be served so. The children easily imbibe these bad influences, and are inadvertently taught to hate a person, who, perhaps, strives to love them ; a woman, who, from the time of her marriage, filled with a just sense of her duty, may have resolved to do them all the justice in her power, and to treat them with all possible lenity. Her case is very hard : all her endeavours to please are fruitless : a bad construction is put upon her kindest actions : she strives in vain ; is unthanked ; and, perhaps, repaid with ingratitude. And this, Madam, I have, sometimes, known to be the case of by far the best woman in the neighbourhood.

REALLY, Sir, said I, you give a very shocking account of the uncomfortable state of being a mother-in-law ; enough to frighten any woman from the thoughts of marrying a man, who has children : but, however, if she has the goodness to persevere in her kindness, she must surely win them over at last, their pre-
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prejudices must vanish; and, if Mr Prior's remark be true, that

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she will then have the satisfaction of a glorious revenge: having made this noble conquest, she will force them to do justice to her merit, and, in spite of themselves, to give her their love, their esteem, and their gratitude. What are all the submissions in the world to this? to see their cheeks glow with affection, at the same time that they, with an honest blush, own their error: this is not only heaping coals of fire on their heads, but on their hearts too.

THIS is very true, said Lucius, smiling, and giving me a look of approbation; but few tempers can hold out against ill treatment: ingratitude may sometimes sour the best minds; it too easily prompts them to make a return in kind: and when this is the case, both the lady and the children are worthy of pity.

WE now went up stairs, where we found Prudilla in a much weaker condition than when we were here before: but we had hardly taken our seats, when we heard Mr Stevens talking to a woman at the chamber door, and having desired her to step down into the pantry to refresh herself, came in with a child in
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his arms. Lucius and I arose: our eyes were fixed on the infant, which, smiling, held out its little arms to me: but Mr Stevens not observing this, carried it to Prudilla, who, giving a deep sigh, and looking upon it with eyes swimming with affection, desired to kiss it: but the child turned away, and, perhaps, frightened at her ghastly appearance, still struggled to come at me; which she immediately did, the moment she was set down at her mamma's knee.

THIS little incident, trifling as it was, gave me a good deal of pleasure. I sat down, and placing her on my lap, gave her a kiss: she fondled me, and, with an innocent smile, stroked my face, for half a minute, saying, Ah, poor! then giggled, and hid her pretty hand in my bosom. I could not help being fond of the dear creature. I kissed her several times, without even knowing why I did it; it was giving way to an impulse, which I could not resist. I considered her as a part of my dear Lucius: I endeavoured to trace in her face some of his well known features. I cast my eyes on him, that I might be able to form a more accurate judgment of the resemblance; when I could not help observing, that, with a look of peculiar pleasure, he seemed to watch all my

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actions, while, at the same time, his countenance was overspread with a softness, that methought expressed a paternal affection working in his heart. While I was thus engaged in endeavouring to trace out, and, by the help of fancy, to prove a likeness between the lineaments of a face that was placed before me, and those in miniature placed near my bosom, my glances frequently met his; and the satisfaction, and delight, that appeared in them, gave an additional pleasure to that which arose from the indulgence of these fooleries. Lucius, notwithstanding this visible satisfaction, still continued silent, and seemed at a loss how to behave; though so many expressions of my tenderness might well be supposed to authorise him: and I was just going to chide him for it, when Prudilla, with a sigh, cry'd in a very peevish and jealous tone, that she thought it very hard that she might not have the pleasure of kissing her own child; that she saw plainly I should spoil it; and that it was an odd way of shewing my kindness, to take her from a person that must be supposed to love her better than I, or any body else could do. Lucius coloured, and, giving her a look of indignation, was going to speak, when Mr Stevens began; for he being let into the important secret,

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secret, was now suffered to continue in the room. What do you mean, sister, said he, in a hasty severe manner; would you not have the lady love the child? If you are so jealous, that no body must be fond of her but yourself, e'en take her with you. A good mother would think herself very happy, in leaving it to the care of a person, who is disposed to be fond of it. A good mother! returned she, crying: you are always reproaching me with my guilt: why must I be told of it?—Why must I be upbraided with being a mother? But yet it is too true—to my shame it is—would to God I had never been a mother!—would to God I had never deserved to be a mother! See there now, cried Mr Stevens, I profess there is no such thing as speaking to her: I reproach you!—Well, but it's no matter; and then addressing himself to me, Dear Madam, said he, excuse this treatment: my sister's illness makes her so peevish, that she hardly knows what she says: be so good as to let me take the child.

Lucius and I stared; and it was not without some struggles, that I stifled my resentment. I was two or three times going to break out, and to interrupt them; and had I followed the first dictates of my passion, so much

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much was I provoked at her manner of speaking, that I should have disowned all my tenderness to the child, though my heart would have given the lye to my words; and have vented much more bitter reproaches, than those she received from her brother. And, perhaps, in the heat of my resentment, I might have told her, that, to oblige her, I would readily disclaim all relation to it. But a few moments reflection, and the sight of Lucius, made me resolve to speak in a different manner; and Mr Stevens's good-natured apology, not to speak at all. Could I, Madam, have said any thing that would have displeased Lucius more? Could I have behaved in a manner more contrary to the settled disposition of my mind? Yet passion would have done what my reason would for ever have disallowed. Mr Stevens took the child, who clung to me, and, giving me a beseeching look, cry'd at parting: He stepp'd with her to his sister, and setting her on one of the arms of the chair, she had just strength enough to keep her from falling. She kissed her two or three times; but had hardly had her a minute, when saying, that her crying distracted her head, she desired that somebody would take the naughty girl from her. Lucius seized her

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in his arms; and first seeming to observe my looks, hugged her to his bosom, kissed her with the affection of a tender parent, and then brought her to me, and desired her to kiss me, which she readily did. He smiled, and being apprehensive that Prudilla's ill temper might again shew itself, wish'd her better, and we both took our leave, Mr Stevens calling for the nurse to take the child. While we were at dinner, Mr Stevens renewed his apologies, and, at the same time, told me, that he had been so provoked at seeing my goodness, as he call- it, so ungratefully return'd, that, notwithstanding his sister's illness, he had much ado to be- have towards her with any degree of decency. And, on this score too, Lucius vindicated his silence, alledging, that if he had once begun to reproach her, his heat of temper would, in all probability, have made him treat her, in such a manner, as might have been attended with very ill consequences, with respect to her. I was not, I confess, entirely satisfied with this reason; I was insulted on his account, and had been shocked with reproaches, in the midst of a glow of tenderness, and while I was giving a high testimony of my affection to him, and engaged in an employment, which my affronted pride made me almost look upon as an act of

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supererogation. However, I seemed to admit of his excuse, and as I made no reply, but took pains to curb and conceal the remains of my ill temper, which had now pretty well subsided, he seemed to think me perfectly satisfied with it.

You see, Madam, that I can be out of humour without cause. Lucius was certainly in the right : for how barbarous would it have been in him to have retaliated an affront, on a woman on the very verge of life, merely for a weakness and peevish fretfulness, which her illness, added to her uneasy reflections, might well excuse ! And had the consequences been what he had just reason to dread, I am sure he would never have forgiven himself.

OUR conversation, Madam, for the rest of the day, was so little interesting, that I shall not trouble either you or myself with a repetition of it. And, indeed, I have already given you trifles enough to make you think this a most trifling letter. My mind was, however, in a most delightful situation, all the afternoon, and, particularly, when we took our leave; and the engaging manner in which Lucius made his acknowledgments upon our return home in the coach, strengthened and confirmed every delightful sensation. My dear

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Felicia, said he, taking hold of my hand, and giving me a look expressive of every thing that can be called tender and generous; how kind, how obliging is your whole behaviour! how agreeable is my surprize to find nothing but the dearest proofs of affection, where I expected to meet with reproach, and to see you generously overlook a crime, which would raise the indignation of almost every other woman! To see you care for a child, which is not your own! A child that is——But I can't find words to express half my meaning. Is all my tenderness too little for you, that you must thus endeavour to encrease it, with the most sensible obligations, and to add to love the highest admiration and gratitude? How much are you mistaken, cry'd I, laughing! what will you say if I tell you, that I know many ladies, and, I believe, some of strict virtue too, who have adopted it as a maxim, that “a reformed rake makes the best husband.” This is really a most ridiculous, as well as indecent assertion, and, whenever it is tried, a most dangerous experiment: but as vanity makes them always flatter themselves, that their charms are capable of producing this wonderful reformation, they are hardly ever afraid of marrying, even
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the most abandoned libertine, though sunk a thousand degrees below the dignity of a man. Pray what would these people say to a fault, which must appear extremely small, when compared to years spent in the diabolical employment of ruining innocence, and in all the cruel infernal arts of falsehood, deceit, and treachery? I am surprized, my dear, said Lucius, that ladies, who have adopted such a pernicious opinion, should have so little prudence as to make it public. Have they no sense of modesty? Can they be insensible, that people will be apt to charge them with being influenced by desires, that prompt them only to approve a man, who has given before hand convincing testimonies of his ability to gratify them; and that, for a certainty of this, they will sacrifice every other consideration, and prefer him who has proved himself a villain? You know, my dear, it is not such as these I meant. I would not do you the injury to mention your name with theirs: nor am I solicitous about the dislike, or approbation of such as these: but that you should thus generously hide my faults: how can I sufficiently thank you! That you, who are modesty itself, a friend to every virtue, should, instead of upbraidings, lavish your tenderness,

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and with all the blandishment of love cares, an infant, that—Hold, hold, my dear, cried I, laughing, a truce to your flattery, I beseech you. Pray how long have we been married?—Above nine months I believe : it's high time sure to have done with compliments : why we ought to have had twice as many quarrels ; and, to follow the mode, we should before this time have begun heartily to hate each other :—but to be serious, added I, with a gravity much more suitable to the present disposition of my mind than this flight, which, however lively, was all affectation ; to what purpose should I torture you, by reproaching you with a fault long since passed ? Can I give you pain without feeling it myself ? Since none of us are perfect, ought I not rather to rejoice that you have so few faults, and so many virtues to counterbalance them ? I am very sensible that should a young woman, with the same temptation, so readily forfeit her honour, she would be entirely inexcusable, and her crime would admit of but little alleviation. I am sensible too, that though she would suffer the greatest infamy, by becoming a mother, your crime, in the eye of heaven, may be as great as hers ; yet the world that would condemn her, will excuse you : and shall I

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be more obdurate, and less ready to forgive, than a stranger? I who have improved by your example, and who owe to you a vast acquisition in knowledge, and in many sublimely delicate sensations. It was you, who first taught me to converse with myself, to know the pleasures of reflection, and all the delight that accompanies heavenly gratitude and love. With all these obligations, have I reason to complain, that you are a man and not an angel? Though you have been frail, your mind is still untainted. I have not the least fear of your infidelity to me. It is my duty—it is my interest, to make you happy, and, I hope, it will always be, as it is now, my highest pleasure. O Lucius! where could I have found a husband like you? for, as Hamlet says of his father, “Take you for all in all, I ne’er shall look upon your like again.”

LUCIUS embraced me; but told me he might, with far greater justice, retort the charge of flattery upon me. He confessed, that he had many imperfections, and the most tender and obliging things were said on both sides; but I have now neither the leisure nor inclination to repeat them. May every refined delight be yours, and

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may your ladyship ever be as happy as is, at present,

your sincerest friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXVIII.

I Am very glad, Madam, to find that both you and your aunt approve my conduct: but if you make my letters so public, as to shew them to your friends, you will oblige me, in spite of my own inclinations, to write with more reserve. The account of the dispute, between her and you, on the propriety of Lucius's reproving a young woman, whom he thought a partner in his guilt, is very diverting: but I am more pleased to find that confidence and unreserve, with which I have related certain events, and which I was not altogether satisfied with, sufficiently justified, by her observations. It is with inexpressible delight I hear her say; "that the ingenuity of
" mind, which could prompt him to under-
" take so irksome a task, and the modest diffi-
" dence that accompanied his behaviour to
" me, so opposite to the bold confidence of a
" man,

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“ man, who would rather glory in his guilt,
“ place him in so fair a view, as to make
“ him, in her opinion, more amiable than
“ if he had wanted this shade to heighten the
“ lights, which form the portrait I have giv-
“ en of his character.”

AFTER this compliment to Lucius, would not any one imagine that I was a tolerable painter? She talks of lights and shades mutually setting off each other; and what else is necessary to compleat the picture? How unreasonable is it in her, to insist upon your desiring me, to present her with a more finished piece, and to give the portrait of his mind in one view! But you must be obeyed. And yet how difficult is the task! Where shall I begin? He has all those endearing impressions of humanity, those native traces of goodness, which the mind approves upon the first view. His virtue costs him little or no pains, it springs freely from his soul; while the easy sweetness, with which it is accompanied, lets every one see that it is attended with all the pleasures of self gratification: It is the result of a refined taste, a correct imagination, and a settled judgment. From hence his beneficence derives its virtue, as well as its source, and not from a consideration of the

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pleasure that accompanies it. In short, he has a mind so noble, so disinterestedly and freely virtuous, that a person, who would represent virtue at a continual war with ourselves, would scarcely allow him to have any virtue at all. Nay, if there be any foundation for the opinion of those gentlemen, who place the perfection of a virtuous action, in the opposition it meets with from nature, he is absolutely incapable of performing one, either generous in itself, or acceptable to his God. If this commonly received opinion be true, it will prove that no one, who has not first been a compleat villain, can possibly attain to the sublime character of a good man. That he who fluctuates between the rage of appetite on the one hand, and his duty on the other, is the fairest character upon earth; and that a man of regular desires, a man of strict honour, acting from the most generous motives, is the most unhappy creature living; since his virtues, becoming by practice in a manner constitutional, must lose all their value, and, consequently, their reward. But let it be considered, that the *strength* of every vicious propensity, is only the *weakness* of the opposite virtue; that a reluctance to an act of humanity, can only proceed from the hardness of a heart, petrified

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trified by a criminal selfishness; and that the very suspense between virtue and vice tarnishes the virtue, though it should become victorious. Can that be an imperfection in man, which is the glory of all the higher orders of created beings, and even of the great creator himself? For, as a most ingenious author says, “If compulsion be of the essence of virtue, the conduct of even the supreme being has much less merit in it, than the most dissingenuous of his creatures:—for to practise virtue, the *highest* degrees of virtue, without *constraint*, to pursue it upon a principle of free choice, for the mere pleasure and approbation of the thing itself, as his glory, and his happiness, is what constitutes our idea of the divine perfection: and shall the same thing, which gives such a superlative grace and lustre to the divine character, cast a shade upon the human? So that, after all, constraint and self-denial are so far from being *necessary* to virtue, that it is mere *weakness*, and want of virtue, that gives them either use or expediency.” *

THUS, Madam, I have been at the pains of embellishing my letter, and setting off my

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* See Philemon to Hydaspes, the second conversation upon false religion, page 102, 103.

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own reflections, with a long quotation, to contradict a favourite opinion of your aunt's ; and to prove, that my dear Lucius may be a good man, without having a violent inclination to be a bad one. There are instances, it is true, in which virtue is attended with some degree of self-denial ; and this would, doubtless, have been the case of Lucius, had he had virtue to refuse the proffered favours of the unknown Prudilla : but, however difficult the conquest is at first, a steady adherence removes every obstacle ; the temptation, arising from future attacks, becomes less and less, as the mind becomes more perfect ; perseverance treads down the briars, and makes the path plain, easy, and delightful ; unnumber'd beauties open to our view, and the rugged road becomes the lawn of pleasure ; the mind is at leisure, calmly, to contemplate the divine landscape that lies before it, to enjoy the fragrant breeze, to taste the charms of conscious innocence, budding with golden fruit ; and, above all, with rapture to behold the smiles of heaven, beaming celestial light, and divine complacency.—

BUT whither am I rambling ? It is time to trace back my steps, and, like a good wife, to return to my husband ; and, as I flatter myself, that I have done him justice, I will proceed

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ceed with his character, which will be best illustrated by his conduct. His usual employment is; in giving joy to a number of grateful dependents; and sometimes Marilla and I have the satisfaction of joining with him, in little acts of beneficence and compassion. When there are immediate objects of distress before him, how readily does his sensible heart catch their sorrows! how speedily does he anticipate their wishes, and turn their grief into admiration and joy! while his affability and condescension give an irresistible grace to his benefits. But not contented with doing good, when forcibly touched by objects of pity, he endeavours to prevent the least approach of unhappiness and misery, and provides against the poor's asking for relief, by placing them above the want of it.

WITH regard to this his principal view, he has laid a plan for making considerable alterations in the garden. To serve the poor, he has already * levelled giants with the ground, demolished enchanted castles, and will shortly, by an arrangement of more natural beauties, utterly banish the *phantastical*; which, like the Chinese paintings, can only please, by showing a kind of resemblance of nature, in

* See Letter XXVIII. p. 39.

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in the most whimsical and natural proportions. The choicest flowers, instead of being deposited in knots, are to be carelessly strewed amongst the short grass; and, being mingled with every species that adorns the fields, will, in the most beautiful manner, brocade the velvet carpet: while the tulip, auricula, and carnation, and all those, whose rising stalks would render them liable to be broken by the undistinguishing foot, or the roller, are to retire to the margin of our walks, and skulking close, to seek protection from the nicely cut verdant walls, and obelisks, that are still to retain their form. We are to have, in one part, groves and vists of ever-greens, while in another, the vine, the honeysuckle, and the ivy are to entwine the barren trunks, and mingle with the branches, of a row of elms, that extend across the extremity of the garden, but which, at every walk, leave an opening to let in a view of the neighbouring country. Thus, in those seasons, when the rain, or the frost, with-holds subsistence from the families of our poor tenants, we shall always find them employment, till they can return again to their usual labours. By this means our most agreeable accommodations will become of extensive benefit, and our very amuse-

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amusements, accompanied with those pleasing sensations, which result from a calm, undisturbed, benevolence.

THE man, who has personal merit, may safely depend on being treated by Lucius with the utmost respect, though his circumstances are ever so low: for his poverty, so far from being a reproach, seems, in his opinion, to entitle him to a superior kind of deference. He relieves him with an air, that shews he is only paying a debt due to humanity; and so cautious is he of giving a shock to his sensibility, that he has the look rather of a person obliged, than of one conferring an obligation. For the relief of distressed merit, he denies himself many of the elegances of life, and, particularly, those of the table, from which every costly luxurious superfluity is banished. The meanness of a man's natural abilities never inspires him with contempt. If his heart be good, it is all that he requires; though he cannot give him the esteem due to a friend, he is, in his opinion, a much more amiable character than the man that wants humanity, though possessed of every other qualification that can entitle him to respect: and, indeed, without this, fine sense, the most brilliant wit, the most profound erudition,

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dition, added to the glare of wealth and high birth, can extort no more from him, than a stiff formal civility. He is, in one word, an enemy to nothing, but vice and affectation; but he can ridicule the latter, and yet give the person a share of his esteem. His conversation, indeed, wants that brisk gaiety, and sprightliness of fancy, and all the light and airy sallies of imagination, which we comprehend under the term *wit*; and as to repartee, he seldom indulges it. He has but little taste for these sparkling advantages in others, he regards them in too mean a light; and, therefore, is not sufficiently sensible how much these natural accomplishments give a brilliancy to conversation. When he talks, his strong sense is enlivened by a happy turn, a natural elegance of expression, and his language, like his sentiments, is not only just but sublime. Yet gravity is not always agreeable, and there are moments when folly becomes pleasing, and we find a delight in being ridiculous: from hence wit derives its most pleasing charms: for with too much wisdom we are sometimes apt to moap into dulness. But this is a case that rarely happens with him, though sometimes it does with me. His spirits flow with a smooth and even stream, whilst I, having
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sometimes airy flights, am subject to sink into a dulness, which folly and impertinence are best adapted to relieve.

You need not be told, Madam, that this is partly my case at present ; the heaviness of my expressions, towards the conclusion of what I have written, sufficiently indicates that of my mind. I have lost myself in drawing a character, every way so dear to me, in describing a man whose soul is the soul of friendship; no wonder then that my spirits flag ! But, after all, your ladyship will, perhaps, think, that my affection carries me too far; and that while I am painting the *husband*, I am only discovering the fondness of the *wife*. I will, therefore, in pity to you, as well as myself, finish this pleasing, though difficult subject ; and, to secure myself from the double charge of dulness and partiality, leave, at least, half his virtues untold. With my sincerest compliments to your other self, and your very good aunt, I am

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

most obedient,

FELICIA MANLY.

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LETTER XXXIX.

DEAR MADAM,

I Can now inform you, that Mr Stevens has been at Mr Manly's, where he had an opportunity of an hour or two's conversation with Sophronia and Marilla; when, to their no small surprise, under the seal of secrecy, he unfolded the whole affair; relating to the child, and they readily agreed to take the pretty infant into their care. After this he went to my aunt's, where he found her son, who arrived the day before from his travels, and who was just returned from paying a visit to Mellifont, and his sister Amelia. As he was just setting out to see us, Mr Stevens altered his intention of staying there to dinner, and readily agreed to accompany him. Accordingly, they arrived, attended by a very smart young gentleman, who had commenced an acquaintance with my cousin, while they were abroad, from the single consideration of their being countrymen: they, therefore, returned together, and, as his friends lived in Yorkshire, he made my aunt's in his way home, and, at my cousin's request, consented to stay with him

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him two or three days, to rest and refresh himself on his journey.

LUCIUS received them all, with great respect, though Mr Stevens was, I believe, the most welcome visiter. The gentleman, who was an absolute stranger to every body present, except my cousin, made an agreeable appearance; he had an easy flow of words, and an animated expression; but his conversation was that of a professed libertine. He swore very fluently, and endeavoured to divert us with a recapitulation of several of his adventures in France and Italy. My cousin had so much less of the gentleman in his behavior, as he had more affectation; and, indeed, he had acquired nothing by his travels that I could discover, but a low kind of knowledge, that he had better have been without, a greater stock of vanity and folly, and a nack of impertinently introducing a little French: and that his conversation might want nothing to render it disagreeable, he swore twice as much as his companion. For he had scarcely sat down, when taking a glass of wine, he cry'd, with a ridiculous affected grin, 'Sblood, Madam, you see that I have lost *rien* by my travels, and so, damme, *à votre service*.—Ha, ha, ha!—Why, lookce,

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looker, that is as much as to say, My service to ye.

WE had but once before the honour of entertaining such company ; however, as this was the first time of our seeing my cousin after a long absence, and, as the other was both his friend and an absolute stranger to us, good manners, or rather the custom of the world, would not suffer us to hazard the giving them an affront, by a reproof, which, however just in itself, would have been taken as a gross insult. Dinner was but just over, when we were agreeably surprized with a visit from a very worthy gentleman, the minister of the parish. But it was sometime before we received any relief from his company : and, indeed, though reproof was more suitable to his character than ours, I soon found that he also had too much of the same good breeding to interrupt them. The stranger ran on with his intrigues, referring every minute to my cousin, to whom he always gave the name of his pocket-book, to know either the precise time of an event, or the name of the place where the important trifle was transacted ; when the latter, to shew his exact punctuality, and to indulge, perhaps, a kind of vanity in displaying the strength of a memory, wholly

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taken up with trifles, was sure to launch out into twenty particulars, foreign to the question. He never forgot the name of the meanest village, and, if he was asked, what any town was called, where they had dined, he not only readily replied, but added, of his own accord, the sign at the gate of the inn, what they had for dinner, whether the wine was good or bad, and some little adventure of his own, and this by way of episode; for when he had done, he always put the other in mind to go on again: *But, Damme Jack! —as you was a saying— allons—allons*, constantly concluded whatever my wise cousin had to say. Thus they played into each other's hands, while we had nothing else to do, but, like humble auditors, to listen to their impertinence.

THE tea-table did not procure us any intermission; and finding the clergyman had no intention to interpose, I stepped aside into the next room, desiring him to follow me; where I told him, that he would oblige me, if he would take upon himself the trouble of giving them a genteel reproof: for I could not bear to hear them swear, with such untroubled freedom. He promised that he would, and we returned to our chairs. We had hardly

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ly sat down, when my cousin gave him a very favourable opportunity; for, accidentally spilling a little tea upon his legs, he began to curse, and stamp, and swear, like a madman; but no damage being done, he was presently easy, when the clergyman observed, in a very handsome manner, that he could not help being so unpolite, as to think swearing a very poor accomplishment in a gentleman; that it was a vice that wanted even the colour of temptation to excuse it, having neither the allurements of pleasure nor profit. The predominance of this profane practice, added he, frequently calls for the most earnest exhortations from the pulpit; and, I lately preached a sermon upon the subject, which I wish you had had the benefit of hearing.

THIS reproof gave me a secret satisfaction, and I was going to second what he had said, when the stranger replied: And pray, doctor, be so good as to tell us, what success this performance of yours had. I hope, in the Lord, you made a pretty many converts; for, to be sure, nobody could withstand the force of your reasoning. The reverend gentleman, I must confess, looked a little silly and disconcerted. My cousin laughed, and jogging Lucius with his elbow, and, at the same time, wink.

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winking with one eye, cry'd, just loud enough to be heard by all the company, *Du Diable !* did you mind him, hay—zooks, twig the parson. Well, well, cry'd Lucius, smiling, I heard the sermon the gentleman mentions ; and, I assure you, it was a very good one. I take this opportunity, Sir, to thank you for it ; but you must excuse me, if I am of a different opinion from you, in this particular. Swearing is certainly attended with both pleasure and profit ; and was I to preach a sermon, it should be to prove it.

THE stranger appeared quite at a loss, and rubbing his forehead, I heard him mutter to himself, I will be damn'd if I can tell what to make of this ! Pleasure and profit ! Old Sir Crape is in the right : but what the devil does the gentleman mean ? After all, it is a cursed foolish custom. My cousin, clapping Lucius on the back, seemed mightily delighted, without knowing why. Mr Stevens was in a deep suspense, and looked at Lucius with extreme attention : while I was perfectly astonished. I had been expecting some grave and judicious remark, and did not doubt but that Lucius would advance something new on the subject, that might, for the present, at least, put a stop to their profane impertinence ; when I was all
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at once mortified to find that I had spoke to the reverend gentleman to little purpose, since he was resolved to take their part, and to countenance what I knew his heart must condemn. Fie, fie, Sir, cried the clergyman, after a little hesitation, and, with a tone and look that shewed him equally pleased and dissatisfied, You joke—I am sure you do. Make a sermon in praise of swearing! God forbid—'tis all a joke. Indeed, said Lucius, I am in earnest. Don't you think I should make some converts? It is a taking subject—quite new, I believe, Sir. Phu, phu, converts! pervers! cry'd the good gentleman, with some warmth; ay, converts for Satan, indeed. Dear Sir, for heaven's sake, don't talk in this manner. My cousin was now all life, he seiz'd Lucius's hand, crying, Ay, do, give us, do, *un sermon sur des sermens*. Ha, ha, ha, you see I am a wit. I will be cursed if I don't listen to you; faith! I will remember every word. Come, begin, commence. No, no, cry'd Lucius, why in such haste? I am not used to preaching, and, therefore, as this will be my first performance, a day or two's time is little enough to prepare myself. If you will all give me the favour of your company, the day after to-morrow I will

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will oblige you. Mean while, I must desire you, and this gentleman, your friend, to consider the matter seriously, and prepare yourselves to anticipate what I shall have to say : by this means, you will justify this practice to your own minds, and, whenever you are attacked, in this manner, again, be ready, with my assistance, to vindicate yourselves to the world, as well as your own consciences. I would have every body act from principle, and, therefore, I must beg you to endeavour to suspend the practice, only, till you can recollect some good arguments for its vindication : this cannot, surely, be very long — a quarter of an hour, perhaps, may furnish you with sufficient motives : but if not, I would not have you be discouraged; there can be no great hurt in waiting till you hear my lecture, which, I dare promise you, will furnish the strongest and most convincing reasons, for your continuing the laudable practice. But you must permit me, gentlemen, added he, with a smile, as your advocate and friend, to insist upon one condition, and that is, that I may be allowed to swear the first oath, and give the first curse. The stranger immediately gave his consent to this proposition, which he acknowledged to be reasonable enough ; while

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my cousin, with a look of pleasure, precipitately reply'd, (at the same time giving a stamp with his foot, and rubbing his hands) Damn it, and so you shall, *de tout mon cœur*, by— Hold, hold, cry'd Lucius, I appeal to the company, if this be using me well.

THOUGH we were at a loss to know what he was driving at, we all gave our assent, and I propos'd that he should suffer some penalty. The poor youth was self-condemned, and, scratching his head, begged pardon, telling us, it was not done with design: but Lucius was inexorable, he pulled out his watch, and propos'd, that he should be oblig'd to be silent for five minutes; and this sentence being approved, he added, to punish him further, that he himself would not swear, till he could find an opportunity of introducing an oath, in such a manner, as to give a grace to the sentence.

THE tea things had been taken away for some time, Mr Stevens had lighted his pipe, and the watch was placed on the table before Lucius, which my cousin, during the time of his silence, continued to examine, with the closest attention: mean while, the clergyman express'd his surprize at Lucius's behaviour, and let us know, that he would not only hear him,

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him, but would sit up all night to answer so wicked a sermon; and he did not doubt but he should be able to overturn all his arguments; and, therefore, invited the company to hear him the succeeding day at church: when he would let them see, that a good cause could suffer nothing by being attacked; adding, that as he had truth and religion on his side, he did not doubt but he should be enabled, through divine assistance, to convince, if not to reform them. Lucius requested that he would hear him, before he promised too much: and told him, that he himself, with all his zeal, might approve what he now condemned: however, he desired him to wait with patience, and, if he was not convinced, he would certainly attend to hear his own arguments refuted. But the stranger was averse to the proposal of going to church, and my dumb cousin shew'd his dislike to the motion, by signs, till he had liberty to speak; and then he loudly exclaimed against it.

THE conversation was now more equally divided, and, at the same time, it was rendered less shocking; for whatever were Lucius's secret intentions, which we were yet unacquainted with, he had already, by siding with them, produced a more happy effect, than

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would, probably, have attended all his remonstrances. Our two travellers spoke slowly, and with abundance of precaution: and while we were all watching them, my cousin was watching Lucius, frequently interrupting him, to let him know, that in such a place he might handsomely introduce an oath; but Lucius had the advantage of constantly proving, that it would flatten, or perplex, the sense of the sentence: when waiting about half an hour to no purpose, my cousin, and his friend, perhaps, tired of this restraint, took their leave, and, in the most obliging manner, left us at liberty, to indulge the pleasure of a free and unreserved conversation.

THE clergyman saw, and confessed, the force of Lucius's stratagem; but could comprehend nothing of the sermon, or his reasons for contradicting an assertion, that had all the force of a self-evident truth: and, as he was now under less restraint, became very inquisitive, in order to search into the motives of this extraordinary conduct: but all the answer he could obtain from Lucius was, that he was really in earnest, and that he would give him no reason to be dissatisfied with his performance. So that he was obliged to wait,

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wait, as well as the others, till the time appointed to gratify his curiosity took place.

LUCIUS had this day acted in a manner quite opposite to his usual conduct, and I now saw that the man, who had hitherto behaved with such an artless simplicity of manners, had regulated his general behaviour from principle, and from choice; since we found that he was able, upon occasion, to assume a character opposite to his own: and if this, Madam, contradicts any thing I have said of him in my last letter, pray impute it to my ignorance of his abilities. The rest of the afternoon was spent very agreeably, and Mr Stevens, before he took his leave, gave me a hint, that he saw plainly that Lucius was only playing upon the two travellers; and added, that he would not lose the opportunity of visiting us on Saturday for any consideration.

THE next day, and part of Saturday, Lucius continued locked up in his closet, attended only by young Trueman, who served him as an amanuensis. The company came at the time appointed, together with Mellifont, my aunt and Amelia, who had received an imperfect account of the affair from her brother; so that Lucius had a tolerable audience. As soon as they were seated, he asked

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ed the two friends, whether they had seriously considered the affair, and if they had found out any important advantages attending the use of oaths, and curses, in conversation. The stranger ingenuously confess'd, that he had considered it pretty closely, and that, so far from seeing any advantage in it, he really began to be ashamed of the habit, and declared, that if he was to think much more about it, he should be obliged to leave it off; for the more he thought of it, the more indefensible it appeared. Lucius then, desiring that nobody present would take any exceptions to any thing he said, rose up and began; while all present, having their curiosity stretched to the utmost extent, seemed to listen with extreme eagerness and attention. And, as I imagine that yours is attended with little less impatience, I here send you a copy, which True-man has just transcribed for your use.

A SER.

A SERMON in praise of SWEARING in conversation.

DEUT. vi. 13. The latter Part of the Verse.

And SHALT swear by his name.

TH E R E is a set of men in the world, who need only be known in order to be despised ; men, who are a constant subject for ridicule, and justly the derision of the gay and more refined part of the human species : men who are so stupid, as to be more enamoured with the pleasure of a benevolent action, more charmed with giving joy to the helpless and miserable, with drying up the tears of the distressed, or soothing the agonies of the bursting heart, than with the lordly pride of wanton power, than in rendering the wretched more wretched, than with spurning at patient merit, or even the satisfaction of racking tenants, hoarding wealth, or all the high gratification of a debauch ; more delighted with the visionary pleasure of indulging their own reflections, and the applause of a good conscience, than with the charms of a bottle, the transports afforded by the lascivious wan-

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ton, or all the high-wrought indulgences of a luxurious appetite. And, in one word, to sum up their character, more afraid of a false, or even an unnecessary oath, than of the point of a sword.

IT is with these poor mean-spirited wretches, that I am now to combat, in order to shew the great advantages that attend a strict compliance with the injunction in my text, *And thou shalt swear by his name.* I shall not here take up your time in examining the context, or even in considering what is meant by the command in my text, which some would confine to the necessary oaths, taken in a court of judicature; but, like all sound divines, and in compliance with the custom of all good commentators and disputants, consider the passage before us, in that latitude, which is most adapted to answer my particular design.

ONE man takes his text, and endeavours, with the most elaborate eloquence, to prove, that the bible he preaches from is a work not fit to be read; that it never was designed for the instruction of such blockheads as his audience, who, by looking into it, incur damnation. What concerns all to know, must be read by none but the priest, or whom he shall appoint. How glorious that revelation, which,

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which, in the hands of the multitude, points the way to misery, but, in those of the church, to eternal life ! It is she alone, who can infallibly inform us, that love, and charity, and compassion, and tenderness, so often mentioned in that old book, the bible, mean spite, and hatred, and inquisition, and burning faggots.

ANOTHER, with pious snuffle, and all the moving force of sighs and groans, proves, that the God of truth is the God of falsehood ; and, finding his scheme contradicted, by the language of scripture, from scripture nicely distinguishes between a revealed and a secret will, both opposite, both contradictory to each other. Scripture he proves to be a lye ; his opinion he proves to be true from scripture. He wisely turns out common sense, to make room for grace. He degrades reason, as being in league with the devil, and, in the pious ardour of his heart, saves himself the trouble of thinking, and cries out—*I believe, because it is impossible.* Ye deists rejoice in these your friends ! Admit them into your societies ! They, like you, can darken truth, they have assisted you in setting fragment against fragment ; and, when the dazzling sun-beams shine too bright, can wisely close their eyes.

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Let me too be permitted to rank myself on this side, and, countenanced by such great authorities, to take a text that suits my present purpose, regardless of every other passage that may be supposed to contradict it: nay, regardless of the text itself, any further than as it may serve for a plausible introduction to what I have to offer.

It is sufficient, therefore, that we have here a command to swear by the name of God; which I shall take, in the common and vulgar sense of the word swearing, to mean, not only all manner of oaths, but whatever goes under the denomination of swearing in conversation, as oaths, curses, and imprecations.

In treating this subject I shall consider,

I. THE many advantages attending the frequent use of oaths, curses, and imprecations: in which will be sufficiently proved, the falseness of that assertion, that swearing is attended with neither pleasure nor profit.

II. ANSWER some objections. And,

III. MAKE a suitable application.

I. I am to consider the many advantages arising from a frequent use of oaths, curses, and imprecations.

In the *first* place, this genteel accomplishment

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ment is a wonderful help to discourse ; as it supplies the want of good sense, learning, and eloquence. The illiterate and stupid, by the help of oaths, become orators; and he, whose wretched intellects would not permit him to utter a coherent sentence, by this easy practice, excites the laughter, and fixes the attention, of a brilliant and joyous circle. He begins a story, he is lost in a vacuity of thought, and would instantly, to his eternal dishonour, become silent, did not a series of oaths and imprecations give him time to gather up, or rather seek the thread of his discourse : he begins again, again he is lost, but having complimented his friends, by calling for eternal damnation on them all, he has thought what to say next, and finds himself able to proceed with a sentence or two more. Thus he still talks on, while thought follows slowly after. Blest expedient ! by the use of which, polite conversation glides on uninterrupted, while sound is happily substituted in the place of sense : by this, mankind communicate familiar noises to each other, with as little intellectual ability and labour, as a pack of well-match'd hounds ; so soften the object of their delight and admiration ! O how preposterously absurd then ! how false, and contrary

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to experience, is that ridiculous assertion, that swearing is attended with neither pleasure nor profit ! For what higher pleasure, what greater profit and advantage can a man enjoy, than to find, that, *in spite of nature, who has directed him to be silent*, he can hear himself talk—talk without stammering, or drawing out each heavy sentence, that lags behind to wait on thought. Ye ideots rejoice ! ye coxcombs, whose costive brain ne'er dictated the flowing sentiment, be glad ! Ye, whom learning never fired, in stupid ignorance lost, exult ! Blest with ease and indolence, you talk, and those, like you, admire ; while listening dæmons clap their wings, and grin applause.

FORGIVE me, Sirs, if, fired with my subject, I lose my usual moderation ; for who can help being warmed at the mention of such glorious advantages as these ? Advantages, which level the conversation of the mighty, and raise the oratory of the carman and porter. Here the lowest frequently excel ; the plowman, with clouted shoon, outvies his competitors, and practises the vices of the gentleman, with more success than the lord of the manor, or the splendid courtier, though adorned with star and garter. Here no abilities,

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ties, no learning, are necessary, no studious hours are required to attain perfection. Tropes and figures, all the flowers of oratory, all the pedantry of the schools, are vain and useless trumpery, compared to these ornaments: they require pains and study, nor can be applied without judgment, and the toil of reading, what are foolishly called, the ingenious and polite authors: but swearing is, as I have said, learning to the ignorant, eloquence to the blockhead, vivacity to the stupid, and wit to the coxcomb.

SECONDLY, Oaths and curses are a proof of a most heroic courage, at least in appearance, which answers the same end. For who can doubt the valour, the intrepidity of him, who braves the thunder of heaven, who affronts the most formidable being in the universe, and treats, with contempt, that all-enlivening principle, which sustains and animates the whole creation? To what a noble elation is the heart of the coward conscious, when he thus defies the Almighty, and imprecates the fires of hell! Let the blustering bully domineer, let him roar out his curses, and threaten all who dare provoke the vengeance of his potent arm; let him terrify by a surly frown, and intimidate when, with
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portly gait, he vents ten thousand oaths and curses on the wretch, who, impudently, presumes to oppose his mighty will—who dares doubt his courage? Who can believe, that the cane, or the toe, when duly applied, have such magic power, as to make him twist, and writhe himself like a serpent, till, with this exercise, his joints, and his mind, become so supple, that he can bend and cringe and ask pardon? Let the meek soldier boast his deeds in war, and, with oaths and execrations lace the self-flattering tale; who can believe that so great a hero should have an antipathy to the sight of steel? Or that he, who challenges the blasting lightning to fall on his head, would tremble, and turn pale, at the flash of a pistol? No, this must never be imagined; for can it be supposed that he has less bravery in the field than in the tavern? With these blustering expletives, then, the coward may strut and look big, and every minute give fresh proofs of an invincible courage: he may bravely sport with that being, whose frown would make the heavens and earth to tremble: he may seem to snatch the vengeance from his uplifted hand, and throw it on his foe: he may invoke the wrath of heaven; and who can imagine that he is afraid
of

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of death, when he is continually calling for all the horrors of hell?

THIRDLY, he hereby not only gives a proof of his courage, but informs the world, that he is entirely divested of all the foolish prejudices of education, and has unlearned

All that the nurse, and all the priest have taught

that he has not only shook off the shackles of enthusiasm, but has banished from his mind, that reverence of the deity, which is the foundation of every system of religion. He is not suspected of being such a fool as to want instruction, since it cannot be imagined, that he has so dull a taste as to go to church, unless, if he be a gentleman, to ogle the ladies; if a clown, to sleep; or, if a tradesman, in complaisance to the sober old women of both sexes, who happen to be his customers: and he has this additional advantage, that he will never be taken for a pious churchman, a presbyterian, a quaker, or a methodist. And, in reality, he is so far from being a bigot to any religious principles, that he belongs to no religious society upon earth. That he is not, nor cannot be a christian, is evident; for, what is christianity? It is extensive benevolence, humanity, and virtue,

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to which he bids defiance with every curse. He cannot be a deist, because they openly profess the utmost reverence for the deity; and, for the same reason, he can neither be a Jew, or a Mahometan, or a follower of Confucius. No, nor even an atheist; since we cannot conceive, that he would so often call upon God, if he was thoroughly convinced there was no such being in the universe; however, he every minute lets us see, that he does not fear him. How unlicensed is his freedom, how glorious and unconstrained! Let the wretches, who meanly bend their wills, and regulate their actions, by the sage dictates of reason and conscience; who stoop to follow the rules of religion, and call them sacred; let these bridle their tongues, let these confine themselves within the narrow limits prescribed by reason and good sense; the swearer knows better, sense, and reason, and religion, are all subservient to his will, he disdains their fetters, and rules those which rule all the world beside.

FOURTHLY, and lastly, another advantage which attends this vice of the gentleman, this noble accomplishment, is, that it sometimes raises him to dignity and honour. Under this head, indeed, I take a greater latitude
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and advert to a remote consequence of the practice of swearing : but, as there is such a close concatenation in all our habits, and virtue and vice are progressive in their very nature, I should not do complete justice to my subject, if I omitted the consideration of it in this particular view. When a man, therefore, by a happy association of ideas, joins to the other advantages of this vice, ideas of wealth and grandeur ; when he sees no argument, that appears of any weight, to bind him down to the unthrifty rules of honesty, and his regard for his own private advantage is too strong, to let him have any for the private property of his neighbour; what should hinder him, when a fair opportunity offers, from raising himself, by the ruin of his neighbour, his companion, or his dearest friend ? He has sworn to a thousand lyes in company, without any view of private advantage; what should prevent him then from taking one false oath, when the advantage is so considerable ? Surely, neither conscience, nor reason, nor religion, can do this : no, that is impossible; for I, who am as infallible as any dignified priest, that ever mounted a pulpit, have asserted, that these are all subservient to his will.

HERE

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HERE the swearer, with an unbounded ambition, aspires to seize on wealth, and boldly to grasp at those riches, which fortune has foolishly given to a more deserving person; and this, in spite of JUSTICE and EQUITY, who are his professed enemies. Thus he rises above the multitude, and gains a lasting fame; not by blood and slaughter, but by cunning, deceit, and artifice; by bursting through the most solemn engagements, breaking in sunder the bonds of society, and only violating what all honest men hold sacred. Suppose, that he fails in his attempt, and the property of the person he has attacked remains inviolate: he is convey'd to a castle, strong as that of a crowned head; where no impertinent intruders dare appear to disturb his repose: for in the day time, he has a porter to stand at his gate; in the night his faithful attendants lock and bar his doors.

SURROUNDED with guards, he pays a solemn visit at the seat of JUSTICE; he has the honour of being admitted to the royal bench; he converses with that sovereign personage herself, and, for a considerable time, takes up the whole attention of her prime ministers, the lords of her court, who, assiduous to pay him all due respect, wait his coming in their
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proper habiliments; and, though it be ever so early in the day, he is never received with the disrespectful negligence of an undress. The ceremony being over, he is reconducted by the same guards who brought him thither, and who dare not presume to leave him, till he is safe within his palace. He now soon receives the reward of his baffled dexterity, the glorious fruit of his ambition. The day arrives, devoted to mirth and jollity; business and care are laid aside, and every labouring hand has now a holy day. He walks, or rides in his triumphal car, attended by a numerous throng of gazing spectators: he is mounted above their heads, and his neck, not his temples, adorned with a civic wreath, and his wrists with an embraiture, composed of a matter, something coarser, indeed, than that of pearls and diamonds. This is no sooner done, than gaping thousands send forth shouts of joy, and bending low, even to the ground, pay him homage; then rising up, with loud acclamations, present their tribute, striving who most shall pay, who ofteneft bend. He is covered, he is loaded, with their gifts, and sensibly touched with their bounty. The more he gains, the more unenvied here he stands, while all rejoice, and give the applause that is his

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his due. But, let his modesty be ever so great, let his blushes be like the trickling drops of crimson, painting his bashful cheek, and prompting a willingness to retire from these honours; yet one hour, at least, he is restrained to stay, to receive the willing offerings of the multitude. Thrice happy man! had conscience, or had reason sway'd, thou never hadst thus been blest; unknown thou mightest have lived, unknown have died.

II. I COME now, in the second place, to answer some objections: but as these, after what has been said, must appear extremely trifling, I shall be as concise as possible, and hasten to a conclusion. It is said,

IN the *first* place, that the swearer acts in direct opposition to all the rules of right reason.

BUT how can this be called an objection against swearing? What have we to do with right reason?—We leave it to the dull wretches, the men of reflection: and yet there are some of these, who attempt to mimic us: but if they act inconsistently with their own abilities, let them look to that. An upright man is a downright fool, if he swears at all. Let those who can talk without it, extol their

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wonderous talents ; they have no need of this polite vice to recommend them to the world. The squeamish wretch, who is afraid of a lye, has no need to swear to what he says, for he is certain that his word will be readily taken. But away with these *yea and nay* wretches, men born to be pointed at ; the sheepish, the sober fools, who, regardless of the boundless liberty we enjoy, talk of rectitude of manners, religion, and conscience.

SECONDLY, and lastly, it is objected, that it is one of the most senseless, unnatural, rude, and unmannerly vices, that ever was invented.

THIS, it must be confessed, is paying a fine compliment to, at least, half the polite world. How can that be *rude* and *unmannerly*, which gives such a grace to conversation ? 'Tis true, we express ourselves strongly, and use none of those languid, sneaking, epithets in our discourse, which your modest men, your men of humanity make use of : but as we talk without meaning, nobody can say that we mean ill. And, indeed, it is a very injurious expression, to say that this is *unnatural*, when so many of us have the honour of being universally deemed to be little better than *naturals*.

AND

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AND now, Sirs, I have proved, so effectually, the great advantages, attending the practice of this genteel and fashionable vice, that there needs but one word by way of application.

CONSIDER, O consider, how ineffimable are the advantages I have mentioned! If there is any one here desirous of obtaining these, and yet is troubled, and intimidated, with the impertinence of a restless conscience, flying in his face, and threatening to haunt him, like a ghost, let him but follow my advice, and conscience will fall asleep. Would he steel his heart against compunction, let him advance by degrees; if he is afraid of an oath, let him come as near it as he can, let him cry, *Egad, ramnation, and o'dram ye*; let him thus chip and carve a few common-place expressions, to fit them to his conscience, and the business will be done. This, practice will render familiar; and the coward, who first trembled at the thought of hell, will soon have the courage to call for damnation.

AND now, ye, who have long indulged this vice, who have arrived at perfection in this great accomplishment, and, by this means, have gained that applause, which nature would have denied you, which reason refused, and

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conscience condemned : you, I say, who, by the assistance of this vice, have distinguished yourselves, either as the orator, the pimp, or the bully : you who, with more distinguished glory, have graced the lofty pillory ; and you who, under specious oaths of speedy marriage, have violated virgin innocence, and rewarded the maid, that loved you, with eternal infamy ; consider these noble advantages, applaud, congratulate yourselves, and rejoice : you have not stopped at the most flagrant impieties ; you have challenged, and defied, the blasting power of heaven to do its worst, and with a disinterestedness, peculiar to yourselves, have generously sold the reversion of eternal, inexhaustible happiness, merely for the pleasure of affronting that great beneficent being, who has prepared it for you ; your indulgent creator, and almighty friend. How nobly ungrateful ! how unselfish your conduct ! Boast your bravery, and consider the wisdom of the exchange : for how blind must you be to every self-interested view, how deaf to the calls of self-love, while infinite unbounded felicity has no charms, when standing in competition with the delight of affronting a benefactor, with the pleasure of a curse, and the satisfaction of hearing your own impertinence !

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STUPIDITY, IGNORANCE, and FOLLY, are on your side: act, therefore, like men, who profess to be their friends, and like the true enemies of REASON, RELIGION, VIRTUE, and COMMON SENSE. You have seen your practice justified with advantages, which you have never before thought of: if these have any weight, if these have any charms, let them have all their influence. To sum up all, let every man act consistently with his real character, and, by his indulgence of this practice, or his forbearance, let his abilities, or his follies, stand confessed.

You have now, I suppose, read this extraordinary performance; but the striking action, the natural expression varied into different tones: the sneering air in which he uttered some sentences, and the thundering pompous manner in which he pronounced those bordering on the bombast, you can form no idea of: these are still behind, and not to be expressed, even though I should endeavour to follow the example of that memorable preacher, who inserted, in the margin of his printed sermon, the proper places where to cough, and where to blow his nose. Lucius had carefully studied these particulars,

which,

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which, however trifling they may appear, are essential parts of oratory. These surpassed all description, they gave life and energy to the discourse, every sentence was animated with a degree of fire, peculiar to itself, which, at once, warmed our minds, and spread abroad the light of conviction.

LUCIUS had no sooner concluded this long harangue, than the stranger appeared most forward to thank him, and not only acknowledged the satire just, but very honestly confessed, that he felt the force of every word, that he was shocked at a practice he had too much indulged, and resolved never more to be guilty of it. My cousin said, he believed Lucius was run mad, and that he could not understand half of it. The clergyman, though he liked it very well in the main, thought it bordered a little upon the profane; but Mr Stevens was very warm in its defence, as was my aunt, Mellifont, and Amelia, though the latter objected to the puns and play upon words; which Lucius vindicated, as agreeable to the ridiculous character he was sometimes obliged to assume, and as most likely to strike the attention of those persons he had in view, who are commonly pleased with mere sounds,

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and

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and but little influenced by arguments that require reflection.

I AM so used to write long letters to you, that I hardly know how to send you a short one. It is a week since I began this, it is therefore time to conclude, and to assure you, that I am very sincerely

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XL.

DEAR MADAM,

WHEN I concluded my last, I had several things to add, which I think worthy of notice, and, therefore, without any further preface, I shall continue the subject.

THE person, whom I have hitherto distinguished, by the name of my cousin's fellow traveller, and whose real name is Smith, now expressed an extraordinary esteem for Lucius, which did not seem to fall very short of the most cordial friendship. His confidence and assurance, which was before the source of great impertinence, was, at this time, (permit,

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Madam, the expression) melted down by a kind of deference and shame, arising from a sense of folly, and a consciousness of superior worth, into a modest manly diffidence, which serv'd to check the first impulses to an idle gait; and cured him, at least in our company, of that forward talkative temper, which had before rendered his conversation very disgusting. His ingenuity in confessing his crime, prepossessioned us in his favour, and we soon found him a sensible companion, in spite of that thoughtfulness that now threw a cloud over his natural vivacity—a thoughtfulness that seem'd to derive its source from a sense of inward guilt, and the secret reproaches of his own mind. My aunt made him a very handsome compliment on that open frankness of heart, which had made him dare to confess that he had been in an error; but she could not do this, without a sigh, and giving an affectionate look at her son. Lucius let us know, that she had spoke his sentiments, and he was now regarded as a person worthy of being admitted, to a nearer, and more intimate acquaintance. Mr Smith, though very much taken up with his own thoughts, seem'd extremely assiduous to please, and to render himself agreeable to every person in the company; but more especially so to

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Lucius. He observed the respect, the friendship, the sweet complacency, that subsisted between Mellifont, Mr Stevens, and us; he instantly regarded these two gentlemen as his friends, and addressed them in a manner, very different to his former behaviour. He observed the regard we expressed for the worthy clergyman, he now, therefore, treated him with respect. My cousin seemed to have lost his friend, and having nobody to strike out his feeble spark of fire, and to give him an opportunity to display his talents, sat silent, with a most forlorn and disconsolate countenance, his eyes fixed on Mr Smith, and a visible uneasiness, at seeing him engross so much of the conversation, and in such a manner too, as rendered it impossible for him to have any share in it. He was, therefore, out of his element: he was jealous of the superior respect shewn to his friend: he was confounded, disappointed in all his high raised hopes of future pleasure, and yet knew not how to complain. In short, he appeared like the figure of moping melancholy, seated on a tomb. What a surprising metamorphosis!

THE rest of the day was spent with great satisfaction; for though the subjects of discourse were extremely grave, yet our minds

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partook of that sober, solemn, kind of entertainment, which, while we enjoy it, is attended with more delight, than the frolic laugh of mirth, and which has the power of accompanying, with a serene satisfaction, the most distant reflections : and, indeed, so exquisitely sweet were these calmly-pleasing, and self-approving sensations, and so intent were they all on the subjects of conversation, that they did not depart till late in the evening, and, even then, it was with a visible reluctance.

THEY had all prepared to go, when Mr. Smith, taking Lucius and me aside, said, with an affectionate tone of voice, I hope you will both forgive my impertinent behaviour at my first visit ; and I am the more solicitous about this, as I have the ambition of being ranked among the number of your friends. Can you, Sir, can you, Madam, excuse my folly ? I am thoroughly sensible of it, in every particular, and am as heartily ashamed of it : I wish your cousin was so too : as for me, I am going to lament in private. My boasted travels, the subject of my former vanity, have been the source of a thousand extravagancies ; instead of improving, they have only served to debauch my mind : but these are no sooner finished, than I meet with a person, who sets

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them before me, in the truest light. The contrast between you and me, has been too glaring not to be observed—what a wretch do I think myself!—but I must no sooner know, than leave you—I leave you with reluctance, and it is very probable, that I shall never see you again. Lucius replied, by giving him the most frank and engaging assurances of his friendship, and, two days after, he set forward on his journey. But it is time to return to ourselves.

PRUDILLA, Madam, has now breathed her last, but, notwithstanding her former terror and agitation of mind, her last minutes were perfectly composed; and as nature was quite spent, she left the world without those struggles, and convulsive agonies, which render that awful moment so terrible, with persons of stronger spirits.

WE have been several times to my father's to see the child, and both my mother, and my sister Marilla, seem perfectly fond of it. It is really an engaging little creature, and I think it impossible for me to help loving it. My duty, in this case, is extremely easy, since it is attended with all the pleasure of following my own inclinations, joined to the additional satisfaction it gives to Lucius.

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AN affair has just happened, which 'gives me great uneasiness, the particulars of which I shall acquaint you with, in my next. I am
your ever affectionate

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLI.

DEAR MADAM,

I AM now to relate to you the cause of that uneasiness, I mentioned in my last; for as you have hitherto been the confident of all my little affairs, I have contracted such a habit of laying my thoughts before you, that I really believe I should find no small difficulty in concealing from you any circumstance in which I have an immediate concern. How great is the force of custom! no sooner does any thing the least extraordinary happen, but I consider it as contributing to your amusement, and frequently sit down to acquaint you with my affairs, even before I have sufficiently reflected, whether they are of importance enough to deserve your notice: so that whether you are diverted with my story, or

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disgusted with my impertinence, depends entirely upon chance.

SOME time ago, I took a servant on the recommendation of a poor, though honest, old woman in the neighbourhood; but I needed not the character she gave me, to prepossess me in her favour. The innocence and artless modesty of her looks, and the easy unconstrained freedom of her behaviour, were the first things that I took notice of, and which really inspired me with a favourable opinion of her virtue and discretion: but this opinion was soon heightened by the sweetness of her temper, and a certain languor in her looks. I hardly ever found her alone, but I observed her in tears; from hence I began to pity her, and, by degrees, this pity arose to a kind of friendship. I, therefore, made her service as easy to her as possible, and from being, at first, my chamber-maid, raised her to be my woman. As her constitution was very delicate, this was a station that I thought she had the greatest reason to be satisfied with. But, though she expressed the highest sense of gratitude, yet I could discover no alteration in her disposition. Being still desirous to contribute to her satisfaction, I endeavoured, by all the ways I could think of, to discover the cause
of

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of her uneasiness ; but she evaded all my enquiries with so much politeness and good sense, that I resolved, at length, to put a stop to my curiosity, till time should wear off her reserve, or some accident, without her consent, inform me of her affairs.

YOUR ladyship is, perhaps, offended at my offering to entertain you with the trifling affairs of my servants, in which you are ready to imagine, there can be nothing of importance enough to engage my concern : but have patience,—I don't doubt but I shall soon obtain your approbation with regard to this particular.

I HAD been called away in the middle of my last letter to you, and was returning to my chamber to finish it. When recollecting, that I should want to use a stick of sealing wax, which I had, the day before, given to my favourite Dorothea, who, at her own request, was gone to Nottingham, I stepped into her room to look for it. But how great was my surprize ! when I beheld, upon her table, a gold snuff-box, finely chased. What could I think ! I called Lucius ; he came, and, at first, suggested every argument he could think of, to remove my suspicions : but comparing the possession of so valuable a box, with Do-

rothea's circumstances, and the manner in which she was recommended to me, he was induced to confirm the opinion I had conceived of her dishonesty. We both concluded that I had caressed an artful, abandoned, wretch: upon which, a number of circumstances presently arose in our minds, that strengthened this heavy charge. Her box was instantly broke open, when, among other things, we found a crucifix set with diamonds, and a chaplet of pearls, and a mass book in Latin and English. Lucius was enraged, and insisted, that she ought to suffer the penalty of the law, and that he could neither excuse it to himself, nor to his country, to screen her from justice: since, in that case, he should be answerable for the next robbery she committed. We both blessed the discovery we had made, and did not at all question but she waited for an opportunity to let in a gang of thieves, in the night, to rob, and, perhaps, murder us in our sleep: and what confirmed this suspicion was, our presently hearing from the servants, that she had several times been seen to give silver to some shabby, ill-looking, fellows, who, under pretence of begging, frequently came to the door. Thus prejudice, Madam, when once raised, is a medium that

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changes the colour of objects, and shapes them to our fancy. Our fears being awaked, imagination is set to work, to invent new scenes of ideal horror. We then deal in nothing but the gloomy and the dismal ; we start at the roavings of our distempered minds ; new dangers arise at every thought ; we catch at every cause of discontent, and, anxious to swell the inward perturbation, search only for fresh grounds of uneasiness. No wonder that the object, that raises these horrid sensations, grows every moment more deformed. While we view only the shades of the direful character, we conclude the whole to be dark and odious ; virtue becomes affectation, beauty a mask, and every perfection hypocrisy, put on only to conceal some deadly purpose. Thus, by a kind of contrast, deformity itself becomes more deformed. From hence we precipitately concluded, that, as we had reason to believe her a thief, she was a murderer too, and regarded ourselves as victims to be sacrificed to her avarice. How frightful the thought ! Old Mr Trueman was called to give us his opinion, when he advised us to send to the next justice for a warrant, to procure a constable, and to search the poor woman's house, who had recommended her.

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THE warrant was soon procured, when Lucius and I, with the good old man, attended the constable, to see if we could find any thing there, belonging to us. The old woman was terrified to the last degree. She was surrounded with many conveniencies, which, a short time before, she was known to want, and seemed raised, in some degree, to a comfortable independance. From whence could this arise; but from her being a necessary instrument in Dorothea's crimes? This was the inference we drew from it. Mr Truman, therefore, secured her, and let her know that she must not leave the house; but she appeared more concerned for her friend, than herself: she would not hear of her being a thief: she ran on in her praises. At last, a tea-chest was found, and she readily acknowledged it was Dorothea's, and that she had the key. It was, therefore, broke open, when we found in it upwards of fifty guineas, some broad-pieces, several very fine rings, a gold watch, wrapp'd up in cotton, to prevent its being damaged; but what struck me most, was a pair of diamond ear-rings. These I was persuaded I knew again: I was convinced that they were the same, which my father gave me, to keep in remembrance of my dear

mamma

mamma ; and which he had presented to her before their marriage. What could I say ? I would not have lost them for ten times their real value. Had I not reason to be enraged ? —To rob me of what she knew I deemed invaluable—of what I priz'd on my dear mother's account—me, who had given her my esteem, and my friendship—me, who had raised her from nothing—who had caressed her ; who had loaded her with obligations, and advanced her almost to the character of my companion : how ungrateful ! and yet this robbery was, in all probability, only a prelude to the mischief she was to bring upon us.

THESE, Madam, were my reflections, and thus I vented aloud my resentment, while the poor woman, terrified almost to death, cry'd, and, with many sighs and tears, lamented the ruin of a girl, who had been so kind a benefactress ; intermixing loud, and violent, protestations of her own innocence.

AFTER the search was finished, the constable was ordered to keep the woman a prisoner, in her own house, till Dorothea's return, when he was to take them together before the magistrate, who had granted the warrant. Mean while we went home, and I, with a
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forrowful aching heart, retired, with Lucius, to talk over the affair, and to wait the return of Dorothea. Almost every servant in the house shewed their envy, by putting the most invidious construction upon her actions, and, had I been disposed to listen to them, I verily believe they would never have ceased their invectives: all the mischief that had been done in the house would have been, by some one or other, laid at her door, and she was, indeed, charged with faults, of which I knew her entirely innocent.

WE had waited about an hour for her return, when my chambermaid told me that she was come home; that they had charged her with the fact, and that her very looks condemned her. Lucius gave immediate orders to have her taken to the poor woman's, and that the constable should carry them both before the justice; adding, that he would follow them immediately. This news was no sooner carried down, than we heard an extraordinary bustle, and, upon ringing the bell to know what was the matter, a servant came to inform us, that she had the impudence to dispute their master's commands, and refused to go till she had seen me. I then gave orders that she should be brought up. But I had hardly

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hardly spoke the word, when she burst open the door, and ran into the room, attended by the cook-maid, and another or two of the lower servants, who stopp'd at the door. She came up to me as if for protection, and stood trembling, pale, and out of breath: In short, she had lost her cap; her hair was in the utmost disorder, and her cloaths almost torn from her back. What an affecting sight! Lucius seemed shocked, and demanded what was the reason of their treating her in this manner, with a tone of voice that sufficiently expressed his disapprobation. They laid the fault on her, who would not let them take her away civilly: when Lucius observing that they had no right to use violence without his leave, and ordering them sternly to withdraw, our thoughts were turned upon the single object, that, with a look of terror, stood panting before us. Indeed, Madam, my heart relented. Struck with a figure so moving, I could scarcely refrain from tears; but, the next moment, recollecting that she was a thief, a vile hypocrite, who had abused my good nature, indignation again usurped the place of pity.

AFTER a short silence, Lucius, with a stern voice, began, Thou wicked unhappy wretch,
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said he, don't attempt to excuse and palliate your crimes; but, by an open confession, discover whom you have robbed, what were your intentions, and who are your accomplices. This, I assure you, will be the only way to obtain mercy: for, upon these considerations, I now promise to make use of all my influence in your favour.—O Sir! O Madam! cry'd she, interrupting him with an assured air; for God's sake hear me. You know not who I am—If I do not convince you that I am injured—extremely injured, let me suffer all that the law can inflict. Let me tell you, Sir, that I neither ask, nor desire mercy.—The innocent have no need of mercy.—Take care,—take care of what you say, reply'd Lucius; I would give a great deal to find you innocent; but such strong circumstances!—I wish, with all my heart, said I, that you could prove your innocence, but I am afraid that is impossible, such convincing proofs! and my ear-rings too! What ear-rings, Madam? returned she, without a blush: you will not surely say, that I have stole your ear-rings. Yes, said Lucius, they were found in a tea-chest that belongs to you: and I have them here to produce before the magistrate.

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IT was observable that the terror, which, at first, had all the symptoms of guilt; wore off every moment; and, indeed, fear and affright impress upon the countenance of the most innocent, marks which may be easily mistaken for indications of the conscious wickedness of an abandoned mind. How absurd then is it, for people to pretend to form a judgment, from such equivocal appearances! She now, very calmly, desired to see the ear-rings. Lucius took them out of a piece of paper, and gave them into her hand, when, instead of the confusion, which I expected to find in her countenance, she replied, So, I find I am condemned for stealing what is my own. Yours! said I, amaz'd, you will not surely say, that those ear-rings are yours! How could you come by them? Besides, I dare say they are mine. Why, girl, I could swear it. Hold, hold, Madam, said she, are yours lost then? Are they not in your dressing-box? I have not so much as looked, I replied; however to convince you, I will look now, tho' I am persuaded it will be to no purpose. I know them too well to be mistaken. Here I went for my dressing box, and bringing it, with much difficulty, under my arm, opened it before her, when, to my entire confusion,

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the first thing I cast my eyes on, was the very ear-rings I had laid to her charge. I blush'd, and was so struck with the sight, that I had not the power to speak a word. Lucius, therefore, resumed. Well, Dorothea, said he, your innocence, in this particular, is sufficiently recommended: how glad should we be, if it was possible for you to clear yourself of the rest: but how you could come by them, I cannot imagine: I am afraid not honestly. I should rejoice to find that we have injured you, and would, in that case, make you all possible satisfaction. But first put yourself in a little order,—your cap, Dorothea—your cap—but, admitting you innocent; which, I must tell you, I much doubt of, a glass of wine may be necessary to raise your spirits. She now looked in the glass, and, blushing, began in a hurry, to stroak and tie up her long dishevell'd locks, with all the eager concern of a mind that had no other object in view, but a regard for decency: telling us, at the same time, that the consciousness that she could clear herself, whenever she pleased, was a better support to her spirits, than all the wine in the world. Her cap, which, being fastened to her hair, hung low down her back, was presently put on, and by the confusion in her looks,

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looks, and the readiness with which she dressed her head, pinned up the rents in her gown, and reduced herself into a more becoming figure, let us see that nothing but such an extraordinary perturbation of mind, as that she was in, when she ran into the room, could have made her so long inattentive to the decorums of her sex. When she had finished this task, she began :

I AM now to appear in a very different character from that, in which you have hitherto known me. I am obliged to throw off the disguise of a servant, and to reveal a secret, which I would gladly have kept within my own breast, at least, for some time longer. Your suspicions, I perceive, arise from your finding a few things of value, in the possession of a servant, one whom you took into your house, under the appearance of indigence, and low birth. In order then to be restored to your favour, I have nothing more to do, but to convince you that I am born of a very honourable family, and that I may reasonably expect a fortune, sufficient to entitle me to wear these objects of your suspicion. My father, who is now living, is a baronet, and enjoys a very plentiful estate in Lincolnshire ; he was married to a lady of the Romish reli-

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ligion; and a mutual agreement was made to prevent any future uneasiness, with regard to the education of their children. According to this agreement, my brother was educated a protestant, while I was brought up by my mother in her own principles; but she dying about three years ago, I soon, too soon, felt the effects of her loss. She was scarcely buried, when my religious liberties were invaded: my father confessor was forbid to come near me; I was continually importuned with the solicitations of ministers, whom my religion made it criminal for me to hear; my disregard of their instructions was resented as the highest act of disobedience. And thus, by performing what I thought my duty, I incurred a father's displeasure. If I stopped my ears to the arguments that were offered me, it was said that I resolved to be deaf to the voice of truth. They gave me a bible—I durst not read it; they would read it to me, but it was unlawful for me to hear them, and, therefore, I would not suffer them to do it; this was construed into obstinacy. I durst not be so vain as to consult my own shallow reason, when I did not know but it might contradict the infallible doctrines of our holy church. I was now treated with extreme severity; but, at last,

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last, wearied out by my father's, and my brother's importunities, I resolved to appear more tractable, and even went so far, as sometimes to suffer myself to be conducted to the parish church, and to pretend, at least, that I was almost convinced : but this piece of hypocrisy was soon punished ; it reached my director's ears ; when, prompted by a zeal for my salvation, he, in my father's absence, got admission into the house, and gave me a very severe lecture, on the insincerity of my conduct ; exhorted me to be steadfast, and confirmed me by abundance of pious arguments : but before he had done, my father, who had been sent for by somebody that saw him in the house, and who had overheard great part of his discourse, entered the room in a violent passion, threatened to send the good man to jail, and actually kicked him down stairs.

I WAS now treated with more severity than ever, was locked up in my room, and never permitted to see any company, but such as were most disagreeable. A gentleman was introduced to me, and I was forced to receive his addresses ; he was a zealous churchman, and so assiduous to please my father, that, in his presence, he seldom spoke of any thing but religion ; and thus paying his court
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to him, instead of me, made him not more his friend, than he made me his enemy. A day was appointed, for my being married to the man in the world I had the greatest aversion to : what could I do ? my prayers and intreaties were all to no purpose. I was drove to the last extremity, and had no other resource, but flight. I, therefore, one moonlight night, when all were in bed, disguised myself, and taking some of my mother's, and my own jewels, with the little money I had, putting it all, except five guineas, in a tea-chest, made my escape out of the house, by dropping out of the window, which was only one story high, and fled to the priest: but he not daring to conceal me, procured me a horse, and the same night I set out hardly knowing where I went, and, the next day, reached this place before noon ; when being very weary, I found a poor woman, to whom I told as much of my story as I thought necessary to raise her compassion ; to her I gave the horse, which I had before paid for ; and, by her recommendation, I had the favour of being admitted into your house as a servant.

OUR surprise, Madam, exceeded all description ; we let her go on without interruption,

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ruption, merely for want of words proper to form our excuses. For my part, a number of circumstances, as she proceeded, arose in my mind, that confirmed every word she spoke, with the force of the most convincing evidence: the genteel air of her dress, her polite unconstrained behaviour, on all occasions, joined to an extensive knowledge of the works of many of the most polite authors. I recollected that I had once heard her repeat a few lines from Tasso, and I had some reason to believe, that she was a perfect mistress, both of the French and Italian languages. She is a papist.—Her excuses for not joining in the family devotion, the frivolous pretences with which she always avoided reading to me any piece of religion—it was certainly so—she must be a papist—I thought both Lucius and myself perfect fools for not seeing thro', and knowing her in this disguise, a disguise too thin to hide her character from the least discerning eye. I looked at her person:—I was struck at the disorder of her dress—frightful disorder! could I see it without redoubled confusion? I reflected on the indignities she had suffered—brutal indignities! A lady of fortune and distinction—my superior—what savage treatment! how much she was injured!

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red! What a bustle had we been making about nothing, only to shew our ignorance, and hasty passion! Lucius was justly confounded, and hung down his head. She was still standing. Pray, Madam, be seated, said I. She obey'd, and took a chair, and while we were meditating an apology for our preposterous behaviour, she resumed.

I KNOW, Madam, that I pay my court to a Protestant, with a very ill grace, when I attempt to do it, by confessing myself a Catholic; but I know, however, that you will vindicate me from a crime, which you have unjustly laid to my charge. I can, in this case, give such additional testimonies of my innocence, as to strike malice itself dumb. Much more shall I convince you, of whose goodness, and humanity, I have received a number of such pleasing instances as I never shall forget. Yet as I am a Roman, you will, probably, join with my father, and, while you preach to me of persecution and prejudice, sufficiently shew, like him, that you are capable of both. But do not, Sir, O do not, Madam, abuse the confidence I have reposed in you. Don't give me up to the resentment of my relations. No, Madam, cry'd Lucius, I will intermeddle in your

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your affairs no farther than you are pleased to approve.—But what apology shall I make? How shall I excuse our conduct?—You have been used so ill, that it is a kind of folly to ask your pardon. Indeed, I am ashamed, and perfectly sorry for my behaviour; and what recompence is in our power to make you, freely demand it. I thank you, Sir, returned she, smiling; there is really no reason at all for these apologies. I cannot help saying, that appearances were against me, and while you thought me what I seemed, you ought to have done what you did.—This is very generous, Madam, said I, and the only return we can make, is to interest ourselves in your happiness. I thank you both, said she: but will you not then take part with my father? Do you promise to leave me, whilst I stay with you, to the free enjoyment of the only true religion? Yes, Madam, Lucius reply'd, I promise it you very sincerely. I am an enemy to persecution, and to every attempt to force the conscience, however misinformed. A true protestant, from principle, hates all religious tyranny. He is, by profession, the friend of liberty, and ought, therefore, to check every unjust fall, that would lead him to violate it on the meanest object. We allow of no in-

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quisition. The man, who is a bigot, and yet disclaims infallibility, is a contradiction to himself: a contradiction! as great as any we can lay to your charge. We, believe me, Madam, deal not in contradictions: ours is the religion of common sense: we ask not a blind obedience; nor do we attempt, by shutting the bible, and laying the understanding in fetters, to close the eyes, and the ears, to the voice of God. I, therefore, blame your father, and resolve to make use of all my power, to restore you to a perfect liberty; to awaken his affection, and, consequently, to give you a proper share in his fortune; and to do this only in concert with you. Mean while, make use of this house as your own. I sincerely thank you, said she, and shall readily embrace your offer. To be restored to my father's affection, is, indeed, a blessing equal to my highest ambition. To be restored to this, without wounding my conscience!—I should have nothing more to wish for. O my heart! how it longs for the tender union! But the flattering hope is vain, vain indeed! how shall I see him! with what indignation will he look upon his daughter, a fugitive, an alien, a wretch, in his opinion, deserving his utmost hatred. Methinks, I see him stand
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before me, and, with a stern and steady look, reproach and upbraid me, for the uneasiness I have given him. Ah! Madam! added she, you have often found me in tears: you can now no longer wonder at the cause!—I fear I must still be unhappy—perhaps not: however, I will hope the best. Here she endeavoured to compose her looks, and wiping her eyes, which began to swim in tears, she resumed, Well, I will indulge the pleasing reflection of embracing him, who was once the tenderest, most kind, and obliging parent. As to my fortune, that is already secure, by the marriage-settlement: as the daughters were to be educated in my mother's principles, they were to possess her jointure, and, as I am the only daughter, it must all devolve to me, after my father's decease. How happy will your friendship be to me! how richly shall I be repaid for the short uneasiness you have given me, if, by your means, I can live, with peace and pleasure, in my father's house!

I now thought it high time to let her see, that I had the same sentiments as Lucius. I gave her very affectionate testimonies of my friendship, mingled with apologies for the severity of my treatment. I insisted that she should make use of my cloaths, and dress

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more suitably to her birth and fortune. Lucius took this opportunity to send to the constable, and to desire him to leave our old neighbour at liberty ; and, after making him a small present for his trouble, and the poor woman a considerable one, as a recompence for the uneasiness we had given her, they both seemed perfectly satisfied.

WE presently found, that the servants, who had treated the young lady so ill, in a character more upon a level with theirs, had acted only from pride. They were all greatly offended at her never entering into their little cabals ; at her not seeming fond of their company : they imagined that she thought herself above them, and, as she was preferred before them by me, they suspected that I encouraged her self-conceit, and, on this account, she was both envied and hated: they, therefore, rejoiced to see her pulled down, and contributed all they could to press her still lower. But now she was placed in a more exalted view, and no proper subject for their envy, there was a total change in their dispositions: her company, whenever it had been granted them, was an honour, that, in the reflections tickled their vanity ; she had conferred a sort of dignity on their station, and was the kindest,

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est, most obliging lady, and so humble, that she seemed rather to be born a servant like them, than a baronet's daughter. What fine things are birth and fortune ! happy accomplishments ! that can thus change our actions, even in those minute circumstances, that are altogether indifferent !——But let me stop the current of my reflexions.

TWENTY times, I believe, I have been obliged to break off, and as often have I resumed my subject. I am now very much indisposed, and shall, therefore, take this opportunity to conclude, and to assure your ladyship, that I am, and ever shall be,

your faithful friend,

FELICIA MANLY,

LETTER XLII.

I Can now, Madam, give you the conclusion of Dorothea's story. One morning, about a week after that day of uneasiness and unjust suspicions, which I described in my last, the young lady came into my room, just at the time I was dressing, and insisted, with a good deal of gaiety, on performing her usual

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task, which, however, I refused: but she staid till the servant, who had taken her office, was gone; when, sitting down by me, Dear Madam, said she, did not you observe, that I avoided coming before Mr Smith, the gentleman who was your cousin's companion in his travels? I really knew him, at first sight. My father has a seat in Yorkshire, not far distant from his father's. As the two old gentlemen are intimate friends, my brother, and young Mr Smith, whenever we chose to reside in that part of the country, were constant companions. His father frequently brought him to our house, so that, though his person is considerably altered, it was impossible for me not to know him. All my fear was lest he should discover me, under the disguise I had assumed. When he was here, I wished him a hundred times out of the house, and, while you were in the room with him, I was, more than once, put to a terrible streight, by your sending for me, to bring in something you wanted. I dreaded to see him, almost as much as I should have done my father. And, indeed, it appeared to me the same thing; for if he discovered me, he would certainly have made no secret of the place and situation in which he found me.

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He was never here, but I was in the greatest uneasiness; and all the while he staid, I felt the most terrible palpitation of heart.

Now I recollect the circumstance, Madam, said I, I could not help taking notice of the many excuses you made, to avoid coming into the room; and I thought there was some mystery in your behaviour, which I could not comprehend. But I cannot help observing, that had I been so unfortunate as to have thought of this yesterday, I should have construed it greatly to your disadvantage: and foolishly imagined, that it proceeded from a conscious guilt, and, perhaps, a fear of being discovered by a person of the very family you had robbed of such valuable effects. How blind are we! how easily hurried away by appearances! and how careful ought we to be in forming a judgment of others! I am now glad—heartily glad, that I did not, by recollecting this circumstance, encrease my own uneasiness, and your ill treatment. I never was so thoroughly convinced, as I am at present, that even forgetfulness, amongst our other imperfections, has its advantages. May I learn from this, to be ever cautious of censure, and afraid of judging the actions of another!—But pray, Madam, proceed.

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WHEN Mr Smith first came in with your cousin, continued she, I was so happy as not to be observed ; therefore, the moment I saw him, and heard his voice, I hurried out of the room, and afterwards took all imaginable precaution to avoid his seeing me. The last time he was here, I heard him in the hall. He was taking his leave, you were with him, and called me—I trembled, but, soon recovering myself, slipped out of the back-door unnoticed : when having taken a turn or two in the garden, I resolved to go into the wood, imagining that I might there, without danger of discovery, watch the moment of his departure : but the trees prevented me. I then attempted to cross the avenue, at some distance from the house ; and setting off very swiftly, ran against him with all my force. I staggered backwards, and recovered myself, just as he turned about, and looked full in my face. I was struck with confusion—Miss Dorothea ! he cry'd ; and, in a moment, as if recollecting himself, I heard him add, as I flew before him to the other side, I must be deceived ! it can never be Dorothea ! I could hear no more. I fancied he followed me.—Methought I heard the leaves rustle behind me. I did not stop till I was out of breath. My mind

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 247

was agitated with my fears. The method I had taken to prevent a discovery, proved the very means of making myself known. I stood still—I listened. All was quiet. I reflected on what had passed, when changing my purpose, I resolved to step back, to call him aside from your cousin, and by an ingenuous confession of the whole affair, to prevail upon him to keep my retreat a secret from my father—but in this flutter of spirits, so long was I in forming my resolution, and so many thoughts occurred both for and against my putting it in practice, that when I returned to the place, Mr. Smith, and your cousin were almost out of sight. Strange caprice of the mind! notwithstanding the affright and eager haste with which I ran from him; slowly as I had moved to find him, and in spite of all the reluctance I felt in forcing myself to take this step, I now looked upon his being gone as the greatest misfortune. I burst into tears, and—

SHE was here interrupted by Lucius, who, coming into the room, told me that Mr. Smith was already returned, in company with an elderly gentleman, to pay us the visit he had promised at parting, and desiring that I would make haste to receive them, retired.

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POOR Dorothea, who had revived every uneasy thought, by the confidence she had been placing in me, while thus unburthening her mind, was now, to all appearance, in a very unhappy situation. Her eyes were moistened with tears, when Lucius appeared, and gave a shock to her mind, by letting her know, that this formidable Mr Smith was returned, with a gentleman, whom she immediately concluded to be her father; the person she dreaded most to see. Lucius was no sooner gone, than I beheld her sunk back in her chair: her eyes were half-closed, and her countenance expressive of the most lively distress. Struck with surprize I ran to her relief, and endeavoured to rouse her from this situation, by assuring her, that if she pleased, she should not see Mr Smith; but she interrupted me, by crying, O my father!—my father is in the house! I tried every method to comfort her, and, at last, after giving her the strongest assurances that I would use every argument to excuse and justify her, she began to moderate her uneasiness.

I THEN left her, full of the thoughts of vindicating her to the utmost of my power; when, as I went through the passage, I found that she was not mistaken in her conjectures,

for

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for, before I entered the room, I heard a voice cry, Believe me, Sir, I know enough of them, and their priests too : and damn her, if she had as much regard for her own salvation as I have for her——Here I opened the door, and, by my entrance, cut short this fine expression of his pious concern for the future welfare of his daughter. They rose up, and after the usual compliments, resumed their seats, when Mr Smith, giving me much the same account of his meeting with Dorothea, that she herself had just before done, let us know, that the improbability of its being really that lady, in such a dress, and so far from home, made him imagine that he must have been mistaken ; but the circumstance was so remarkable, that, when he arrived at his father's, he could no more help mentioning it to him, than he could the pleasure he had received from the conversation of a gentleman, that I was very well acquainted with, and whom he was proud to call his friend. Lucius, and I, smiled at this compliment, but as neither of us interrupted him, he proceeded to inform us, that his father, after asking him abundance of questions about her, to which he could give no satisfactory answer, at last told him, that she had left her father's house,

250 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

and had been missing near six months, and that he could do no less, than communicate what he heard to the person most concerned to know the place of her retirement. A letter was accordingly sent to Dorothea's father, who came to learn the particulars from the young gentleman himself; and he being desirous to see Mr Manly again, proposed to conduct him to us. He concluded, with letting us know, that he was very glad she had been so wise, as to chuse so honourable a retreat.

WHILE we were at breakfast, the stranger gave us an account of his marriage with Dorothea's mother, related many family broils, that happened on the score of religion, and politics; complained of the disturbance he had met with from priests; that they had spoiled the best woman in the world, and robbed him of his daughter, by persuading the saucy baggage to run away from him. From thence, he digressed to popish tyranny, to massacres, and the tortures of inquisitions: talked in favour of charity, with the rage of a bigot; reproached the papists for the want of it; and with all the intemperate heat, and enthusiasm of party, swore that, if he had the power, he would not leave one of the bloody-minded monsters alive.

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 251

I WAS both surprized and shocked, and could not help replying, with a sneer, that he must certainly be a very great enemy to persecution, since he could take such a generous method of shewing his love to mankind. To this he was going to reply, when Mr Smith very respectfully put him in mind of his daughter, and several of his late wife's relations.

HE immediately took the hint, and acknowledged, that he had gone too far. Said, that he loved his daughter better than she deserved; and having given her abundance of foul names, and nearly as many tender ones, as his resentment, or his affection, had the predominancy, strenuously desired to see the saucy obstinate vagabond.

I DON'T know, Madam, what idea you will form of the character of this gentleman. A man of dissolute morals, standing up for the cause of religion and truth. He swore and preached in a breath, and uttered his sentiments with the positive assurance of a jesuit. His words were dictated by his passions, which hurried him away with too much violence to suffer him to be guided by the calmer dictates of reason. And, indeed, so difficult was it to judge of his real character, that it was some time before I knew whether I ought to
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rank him amongst men of sense, or perfect brutes : though I was rather inclined to place him among the latter. But I was mistaken : he was really possessed of many amiable qualities, joined to a tolerable share of sense, which lay in a manner dormant till the heat of his passion had subsided.

As soon as he was silent, I let him know that he should speedily see his daughter ; but that I thought it necessary to prepare both him and her for the interview. I then, without ceremony, began her history from the time I first knew her, related every circumstance of her behaviour, that could contribute to set her character in a fair light ; described the severe treatment she had met with, and concluded, with relating what had passed that morning, and the condition in which I had left her. I called her my friend, I reproached him, for endeavouring to enslave her conscience, and mingled these reproaches with more bitter ones on myself, for my unjust suspicions. When I began to speak, I resolved to plead her cause, with all the art I was mistress of : but, carried away by the importance of the occasion, I soon lost sight of art. I spoke with the fervour of friendship, and while I was describing the scene of her dis-

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distress, which our rash folly had involved her in, a gush of involuntary tears, which seemed to flow from my repentance, and his insensibility, raised the father in him to such a degree, as seemed to render it difficult for him to contain himself.

He could not now be kept from Dorothea. He confessed, that he had been more to blame than he had ever imagined: he would see his poor girl immediately. He loved her better than ever he did. And did she, cry'd he, behave so prudently? Did she say, she felt such tenderness for me?—Did she not rather tell you, I am a passionate old fool? Well, she is a good girl: and I am glad I have found her. Let me see her, Madam, let me see her, added he. I will see my poor dear daughter, instantly.

He was now in a situation that gave me the highest joy. I instantly arose, and ran up stairs. She was sitting in a melancholy, thoughtful, posture, and, as soon as I entered the room, gave me a look that, at once, expressed her fear and impatience; but her countenance began to brighten into cheerfulness, even before I had time to speak. She ran towards me, to embrace me, while I had only time to cry Victory! my dear Dorothea,

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victory! I have conquered. I see it, Madam, said she, but how? by what means?— I have now no time to answer you, cry'd I, your father waits for you: he is subdued, he is softened, he longs to see you. Here, I took hold of her hand, and led her down, her colour changing at every step. When we entered the room, her father ran to her, clasped her in his arms, and lavished upon her the most endearing expressions of kindness. It was purely the joy of a father, who had recovered a dearly beloved child, after it had been, by some accident, lost, without the least mixture of reproach, or bitterness. Dorothea was silent for some time, and only expressed her joy by her tears: but, at last, pressing his hand, Do you, do you, dear Sir, forgive me? cried she. He gave her the warmest assurances that he did, embraced her again, took his chair, and made her sit by him.

It is easy to conceive, Madam, that Lucius, and I, must have great delight in observing the happiness, to which we had so greatly contributed. For my part, I received many very engaging compliments from both father and daughter, with which Lucius seemed
more

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 255

more pleased, than if they had been paid to himself.

Mr Smith, I had observed, was extremely attentive to the praises I had bestowed on Dorothea, he was greatly affected with her story; and, for the rest of the day, seemed to bear an uncommon share in the happy reconciliation. He observed all her motions, and methought there was something in his air, that expressed as much of the lover as the friend. For her part, she viewed him without terror: he was no longer the formidable man, that had filled her with such dreadful apprehensions; and so far from having any inclination to run away, she conversed with him, with all the freedom of an old acquaintance.

I AM strangely addicted to the writing of long letters, which, I am afraid, tire you; and for the future, I believe, I must be less communicative, in order to be less troublesome. Be pleased to present my compliments to his lordship, and be assured that, whether my letters are long or short, I shall always be, as I am at present,

your sincere,

and most affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

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LETTER XLIII.

DEAR MADAM,

YOUR rallying, so agreeably, an assertion in one of my former letters, that rural scenes are the most unfruitful of adventures, has so much the air of a compliment, that, however undeserved, I think I ought to thank you for it. You may consider Dorothea's story in what light you please; the interest you are pleased to take in her good or bad fortune, ought to induce me to send you the particulars, which are still behind. Without any further preamble, therefore, I proceed.

BELIEVE me, Madam, there is as great a difference between Dorothea's father, when angry, and when pleased, as between any two persons upon earth; you would not even take him to be the same man; were it possible for you to have been an hour or two in his company, after his reconciliation, even you must have thought my last letter a vile slander on his character. So much do these furious passions distort the mind!

THE rest of the day was spent very agreeably, and, at the same time, nothing was omitted

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mitted, that could contribute to confirm the happiness of the amiable Dorothea. Lucius artfully introduced the subject of religious liberty, which he proved to be the birthright of every reasonable being. He made use of the most convincing arguments. He quoted the incomparable Mr Locke's piece* on this subject; a work, which he assured us, was of more value than a Peruvian mine. A high price I must confess. Mr Smith joined with Lucius to answer some objections. He then represented persecution as arraiging the infinite sagacity of the sovereign creator of all things, who, to make room for heaven-born charity, had wisely given such a variety of tastes, degrees of capacity and understanding, to the mind of man, from whence result the love of truth, and the test of every kind and benevolent affection. Uniformity of sentiment, Madam, is, I find, in his opinion, no more desirable, than the dull uniform prospect of a smooth, and wide-stretched, plain; or rather a large tract of barren sand, where no interrupting shades, none of the blooming beauties, that arise from the varied tints of trees, of shrubs, of turfs, of flowers, diversify the enlivening prospect: whilst charity,

amidst

* Letter on Toleration.

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amidst the greatest variety of tempers, educations, and capacities, like the invigorating power of the sun, presents the most lovely scene, and gives life, and spirit, and beauty, to all around : mutual complacency, and benevolence, breathe an eternal spring, and, at once, blossom, bear fruit, and yield a friendly shade.

METHINKS I hear him still, and still see the blaze of humanity darting from his eyes; when he added, With this view, do I look upon my native country, the seat of liberty, and her sister's earthly throne. In this view let us regard the whole world. The honest Turk shall be my friend, the sober faithful Chinese, that lays the divine Confucius to his heart, and the Indian of either world, blest with simple innocence, and native truth, shall be my brothers. Wherever I find a man who loves his God, and loves mankind, I will hug him to my breast.

HERE Lucius paused a while, and then, smiling, asked Dorothea, what she thought of this rant. Am I not, Madam, said he, in the right ; is not this a very desirable disposition of mind ? She gave her approbation, on which he replied, Then what must you think of Popery, with her smooth uniformity of barren
fands,

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sands, which, blown with the baleful wind of persecution, arise in curling torrents, and spread ruin, and destruction, over all the wide creation. Nor can the storm be laid, till showers of blood, pouring from honest hearts, beat down the dust, and, for a time, hush the wild uproar to a calm.

FORGIVE me, Madam, added Lucius, seeing her bite her lips, I do but just touch on a subject, which, if dressed in plainer language, would, I am sure, wound your tender heart. Persecution, whether in Papist or Protestant, is a tempest raised by the breath of hell. And, believe me, if there can be a Christian without humanity and charity, a Devil may be a Saint.

MR SMITH, who appeared not a little delighted with Lucius's flights, and who, doubtless, comprehended his motive for introducing this subject, took care to keep it up for some time longer. He entered upon the cause of liberty as connected with a free enquiry, and shewed the necessity of making use of reason, in order to discover truth from error. He was seconded by Dorothea's father, and Lucius closed their observations, by giving a slight glance at the principal systems of religion, throughout the world. The various pretences to in-

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fallibility were considered and exposed in all : the folly of suffering the conscience to be enslaved, by the Dervise, or the Christian priest, proved equally ridiculous; and the impossibility of discovering truth from error, where no enquiry was made, as great in the zealot of Rome and London, as in that of Turkey, or Siam.

THESE subjects, Madam, were managed with such delicacy, that it was impossible, for even Dorothea, to be offended. She seemed to listen with pleasure : and, when it was done, said, with a smile, that they had inspired her with a love of truth, and that, though she was very sure she should be a Catholic as long as she lived, yet, for the future, she would be one upon rational principles, and boldly venture to study the truth of her religion, and to read even those pieces, with care, that had been wrote against it.

MR SMITH received this declaration with as great an appearance of pleasure, as even her father himself :—and nothing was omitted that could confirm this agreeable disposition.

YOU perceive, I dare say, the tedious dulness into which I am sinking. My spirits, indeed, begin to flag. I will, therefore, hasten to a
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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 261

conclusion, left a more interesting subject should intervene, and demand my pen.

THE rest of our conversation was little more than chit chat. Dorothea had many questions to ask, concerning her friends in the country, some of whom were dead, and some were married; and these, though they furnished not the least kind of amusement to us, as their very names were unknown, engaged almost her whole attention for the little time she had to stay.

THE next morning, I had the mortification of taking leave of Dorothea, whose father would not be prevailed upon to stay any longer. We parted with many reciprocal expressions of affection. But, to the no small surprise of Lucius, Mr Smith, who, at their first meeting, of his own accord, had proposed to stay with us, at least, a week, resolved to accompany them, nor could we, by all the arguments in our power, induce him to keep his word.

I HAVE only one word more to add: yesterday it was a month since they left us, and we have, this minute, received a letter from Mr Smith, in which he informs us, that what severity and restraint could not do, mildness and freedom have accomplished; that the amiable

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able Dorothea is already a Protestant, and that he hopes for the happiness of speedily possessing the lovely convert.

It is with great difficulty that I have been able to write thus far ; I am really very ill, but as much as ever .

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

affectionate

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLIV.

I HAVE now, Madam, the pleasure of informing you, that we have another person added to the family; you, I am sure, will be glad to find that I am able to tell you so. I am now a mother, in the strictest sense, and was happily brought to bed three weeks ago.

O MY friend! how delightfully does the mind glow with gratitude, thus rising from the struggle of convulsive pangs, from the languor of expiring life ! The dear helpless infant too, the subject of our future care, and future joy ! With what new, what tender sensations, do we view the little gift of nature, entrusted to our protection ! Methought a
beam

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beam of heavenly comfort shot thro' my soul ! ease, joy—transporting joy, and mingled fondness : all delight, extasy, and love ! My heart overflowed at once with gratitude, and the softest maternal affection.

BEFORE the first week was over, I began to be alarmed, lest my fondness for my dear little boy, should make me forget my affection for my girl. I told my fears to Marilla, who was constantly with me, and desired that I might have her brought to me every day : and while I endeavour to divide my heart between them both, the pretty creature, by twenty winning ways, seems to strive to hold fast my affections.—My fears, Madam, were groundless, I must love her : and I am really glad that my affections so easily correspond with my duty.

AFTER this rambling incoherent letter, you will not wonder, if I tell you that, though I am as well as can be expected, my head is still very weak : indeed my eyes fail me, and I am forced to conclude. May every blessing attend you.

I am,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA MANLY.

M

LET

LETTER XLV.

DEAR MADAM,

IT was with extreme concern that I read your last letter. Indeed, I sincerely sympathize in your affliction. I don't wonder that the sudden death of a person, so dear to you as his lordship was, should damp all your spirits, and make the most sprightly pen that ever wrote, deal in the most solemn and awful truths. Sickness, pain, and death, have, indeed, a natural tendency to check the sallies of a gay disposition; to call back the thoughts from the pleasurable amusements, the vain pursuits of life, and, for a while, to confine them to the more important review of our own conduct: they are bitter medicines, but such as have the most healing virtues—virtues adapted to strengthen, improve, and exalt the mind. To be forced to take a final leave of that form we love; to bid a long adieu to the spirit, with whom we have daily conversed with pleasing intercourse—is very hard; the sensible heart-strings must feel the dreadful rent, the distressful mind is torn with anguish. But, O Madam, why do you say *for ever*?—The separation is not surely for ever—soon you will

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see him in a more lovely form. Soon the well known mind, cloathed with heavenly radiance, will congratulate your arrival on the blissful shore.—Why do you complain that “he is now a senseless lump of clay?” Mistake not the object of your affection, he is all life, and active spirit. Those shining virtues that, while you enumerate them, seem to add to your grief, and which, you tell me, will ever renew your sorrow, ought to be the pleasing source of joy. Though you lament his loss, lament not his exaltation, nor derive your tears from the very subject of his felicity. He is in the land of virtue; its native clime. How often do you repeat the words *poor dear man*, and dwell on sounds expressive only of pity! Pity, Madam, is not for angels. It is you alone who is the sufferer. O could you but be sensible of his happiness, extasy and transporting rapture would dry up your tears. Would you wish him back? Would you have him; to please you, leave the seats of bliss, and exchange the regions of unfading felicity, for a world of sin, transient happiness, intermingled with pain and trouble? No; this you cannot wish. “But he was happy too soon”—Too soon his pain and sorrow, and dangerous state of trial, were at an end. You would have

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Prolonged his misery. If this be love, what is hatred?

O MY dear friend! recollect your self, and, fill'd with a generous and refined devotion, repose your mind on God; endeavour to lose the sense of your own private apparent loss, in the delightful contemplation of his transcendent goodness. Repose yourself on his sovereign will, whose determinations are always safest, wisest, best. Let every dewy tear be wiped away, by the happiness of him you love. Love him still, but be disinterested in your affection; imitate and rejoice in his virtues; and while you dwell with pleasure on his felicity, anticipate your own,

*Death's but a path that must be trod,
If man would ever pass to God;
A port of calms, a state of ease,
From the rough rage of swelling seas.
Nor can the parted body know,
Nor wants the soul these forms of woe.
As men who long in prison dwell,
With lamps that glitter round the cell,
When'er their suff'ring years are run,
Spring forth to greet the glitt'ring sun:
Such joys, though far transcending sense,
Have pious souls at parting hence.*

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 267

*On earth, and in the body plac'd,
A few and evil years they waste :
But when their chains are cast aside,
See the gay scene unfolding wide,
Clap the glad wing, and tow'r away,
And mingle with the blaze of day.*

PARNELL.

WITH the most tender sympathy and
commiseration, believe me to be,
dear Madam,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLVI.

DEAR MADAM,

HOW great is the power of friendship !
With one dash of your pen you involve
me in grief, and oblige me, by an irresistible
force, to taste the bitterness of your sorrow :
with the next you inspire me with ten thou-
sand sensations, all of them agreeable, all de-
lightful. Nothing in the world, Madam,
could give Lucius and me greater pleasure,

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than

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than your proposal to honour us with your company—Honour do I say? my friendship is offended at the compliment, and would let you know that vanity has no share in our satisfaction. We heartily embrace your offer, and nothing shall be wanting, on our part, to make your residence with us perfectly happy.

BUT have you, indeed, the resolution to leave the delights of the gay circle, the glittering splendor of conspicuous greatness? Can you really have the courage to bid adieu to pomp, and all the parade of ostentation and vanity, the dear delight of a thousand fine ladies, and, in their opinion, the summit of all human happiness? Can you forsake the residence of polite flattery and compliment, to dwell with simple truth, and sincere friendship? and the important hurry of attending on the modes and forms of greatness, for perfect liberty, and a life gliding on in the clear smooth stream of rural peace?

O MADAM! how many delightful ideas rush upon my mind, upon the prospect of such an addition to our little friendly circle! Your enlivening wit, tempered with sober contemplation, will heighten all the other blessings I enjoy. Ever since I have received your letter—the most welcome letter I ever received

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FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 269

ed—my imagination has been filled with the most pleasing images, nor can I divert it from the flattering subject. I have already rambled with you, in idea, along my most favourite walks, and have sallied out with you to taste the fragrant breath of the morning.—But whither does my roving fancy carry me? —I beg pardon, Madam, for thus amusing you with idle visions; but friendship would have it so, and I only obeyed its dictates.

WE had, yesterday, a piece of news that struck us with an uncommon surprise. My father, Mr Manly I mean, received a letter from Holland, which informed him, that his brother, who had parted from him in disgust about twenty years ago, and who had never seen him since, was dead, and had left him, in money and effects, to the value of forty thousand pounds.

LUCIUS and I happened to be present at the receipt of this letter, which immediately opened a very affecting scene. It was read by my father, with a composure of countenance, which would not even suffer us to guess at the contents. He had no sooner run it over, than giving Sophronia a most affectionate look, My dear, said he, you have been a witness of my extravagance and folly, and it is now in

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my power to let you see that my repentance is sincere, and that no change of fortune can make me relapse into the wild pursuits of vice. It is only since my distresses that I have known what it is to live : since that time my happiness has been centered in you, and my family : to make you happy forms the most pleasing part of my life, and it will ever do so. This alone deserves the name of life. O my dear, your virtues have fixed me yours for ever. I here find that my brother is dead. I thought he had been long dead. He died a bachelor, and has left me all his effects. Had this happened some years ago, I had been still, what I now blush to think that I ever was. Here the tears stood in his eyes. He was standing, and my mother was seated before him. His looks and expressions, joined to her surprize, had hitherto kept her motionless ; but she was now unable to contain herself any longer ; she suddenly arose, and threw her arms about his neck. He embraced her—he pressed her to his heart, crying, No, my Sophronia, my vices shall never more disturb the quiet of this dear breast. She begged him not to mention the name of vice : told him that his affection was all that was necessary to make her happy ; that that was wealth
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enough, and of more importance to her, than all the riches in the world : and that with such a husband, and such children, she had, for a good while past, thought herself the happiest woman in England.

AT the word *children*, she cast an affectionate look at Lucius, Marilla, and me. At least my heart was willing to rank me among the number of those, from whose tenderness she derived so much of her satisfaction. But the moment she observed me, she withdrew her arms, and seeming to struggle with her tenderness, stepped back, and again seated herself in her chair.

MY father, at the same time, turned to Lucius and Marilla, called them his dear, his virtuous children, and Lucius, in particular, his benefactor and his friend, and added something about gratitude, which Lucius could not suffer. Dear Sir, said he, forbear these moving expressions of your goodness. For heaven's sake talk not of gratitude to me. What must I be, if I could hear, with patience, such language from a father—a tender, and affectionate father. I know you love me; then why do you make use of words that shock my love to you, and which both nature and duty forbid my hearing?

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My father made no reply, but saluted Marilla and me; and, after giving me some particular expressions of affection, we all took our seats, when giving the letter to Lucius, he desired him to read it, which he had no sooner done, than the conversation turned upon the particulars.

ONE who reflects on the misfortunes of this family, would be apt to conceive, that such a sudden and unexpected change in their situation, must have occasioned the most extravagant transports of joy; and, if he had only a superficial knowledge of human nature, that my father's behaviour was extremely unnatural. Marilla's eyes, indeed, sparkled with a peculiar pleasure: and I could not help expressing a lively satisfaction, from considering that Lucius would now gain from his father an equivalent to what he had acquired from mine: and thus, being placed more upon a level, as to circumstances, approve my father's conduct, to the most avaricious of his friends. The day was spent with rather more gravity than usual. But the want of mirth was supplied by the sweet complacency of friendly hearts, exulting with exquisite joy in the happiness of each other; while the composure and equanimity of mind, which appeared in those

most

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 273

most concerned, still heightened the opinion I had conceived of their characters.

I OUGHT, Madam, to have told you, that the occasion of our visit at my father's, was to see our daughter; the dear sweet creature is very much indisposed, and the doctor informs us, that her disorder will end in the small pox.

LET me speedily know, how long it will be, before I shall have the pleasure of telling you, in person, how much I am

your affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLVII.

HOW are the sweets of life intermingled with bitterness! My poor dear girl has now left the world, and gone to the regions of spotless innocence and peace. I had almost said, that Innocence itself is dead, and fled to its native skies—my little son occurs to my thoughts, and I retract the expression. That opening mind, which every day received new ideas, now feels the full blaze of truth, and, perhaps, would look, with contempt, on the boasted knowledge of mortals. Her pretty laugh, the innocent lisp of her half-form'd

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sentences, when, with little sportive arts, she strove to court my smiles, are ever lost to me.

Oh, why did I let her take such hold of my heart! How vain were my fears, lest I should not love her as I ought! But yet, methinks, had I loved her less—I cannot think of that neither—I would not love her less. But she is happy, pretty lovely cherub! she is happy; for ever free from vice, from care, and pain, and sorrow.

SHE was seized with the small pox, as the physician had foretold; a painful, and a loathsome disease! My affection, and the sense of my duty, compelled me to see her—I saw her every day. But, O Madam! how was the sense of her loss swallowed up, by my solicitude for my son, who was seized with the same distemper, about twenty four hours before she died. O my heart! what did I feel! I blamed my rashness—and, as if my duty and affection had been a crime, reproached myself for what deserved no reproach. With a noble fortitude, Lucius endeavoured to cheer my spirits, and to raise my hopes. He talked of resignation, and of providence; and felt himself the resignation he would inspire. At first the task was hard, but soon the healing balm ran through my soul—he ended, and all within

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 275

within was peace. Every favourable symptom soon appeared, and with them soothing hope. In short, he grew past danger—he recovered, and my grief was lost in joy.

IN my present situation, while I consider together the loss of a child, that I loved almost as much as if nature had bid me love, and the recovery of another, whom maternal affection had intertwined about my heart, my mind enjoys all the united force of serenity, resignation, and thankfulness. I consider my dear infant, as left below for future usefulness, to be the delight of his family, and a blessing to mankind; spared, that he may rise to high attainments in virtue, to perpetuate his name, and the benevolence that glows in his father's breast, when his father, and your Felicia, shall be here no more; and, in short, as spared to give him room to obtain those more glorious, more exquisite, more refined delights, in the world of bliss, to which the negative goodness of helpless infancy can hardly be supposed to be entitled.

You see, Madam, that, in this plan, I have left titles, grandeur, and shining posts of honour, to be struggled for by the busy world. May virtue be the glory of my son, I am anxious for no other dignities; may the doing
good

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good be his imployment, his post of honour. O call not this humility, it is a pride of the noblest kind. These are the flattering hopes that swell a mother's breast, and may they be the presage of blessings, stretched out to the farthest limits of time; while a MANLY, with all the virtues of my Lucius, shall in succession arise in every age, with calm benevolence to meditate on happiness, and diffuse its influence all around. O how my heart beats with the great idea!—My child is this moment brought to me: with what elevated tenderness do I look upon him! I give him the breast he longs for, I press him to my bosom, and write again.

MAY these lips, that now draw thy sustenance from me, be ever the fountain of truths ever pure in their expressions, and strangers to the wanton's kiss: may the joys of innocence, and as much peace as mortals can know, always dwell within this little heart: and when this heart shall melt with softness for some lovely maid, may she return, with purity, thy flame, and render all thy happiness compleat!—Bless me! what nonsense I am writing, with my child in my lap! But I attempt, in vain, to lose sight of the subject, and, I hope, the candour

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four of friendship will bear with the workings of maternal affection.

LUCIUS is now engaged in an employment, that you will doubtless imagine to be extremely visionary. He is studying the history of man, from his most early infancy. And as his son is much too young to express his ideas in any other way, but by the traces of his countenance, and by inarticulate sounds, he examines these with a particular attention, in order to discover the strength of his perceptions, and the progress of his ideas. This employment is extremely suitable to his philosophic turn of mind. Though I must confess, that it sometimes makes me laugh, to see the assiduous care with which he endeavours to trace the impressions made on the little features of a face, which nature has scarcely finished, but which, however, sufficiently describe wonder, pleasure, and pain. From this study Lucius proposes to derive the greatest advantages: he will have an early knowledge of a heart, in the happiness of which he is most nearly concerned; and by this discover the degrees and bent of the passions, the strength of the moral taste, and determine, with the greatest evidence, this important truth; whether there are any seeds
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of vice implanted in the heart*. A doctrine contended for by many learned and good men, with as much heat and zeal, as if vice was the highest glory and perfection of human nature.

So assiduous is he already in this task, that he has even interfered in my choice of a nursery-maid, and prevailed upon me to make this office worth the attendance of a person of solidity and understanding, one of a tolerable education, and of a sober reputable family. And this was the more necessary, as she is obliged to deviate from the common practice, and to regulate her actions by his, or my directions, in the minutest particulars. He is such a friend to nature, that he will not suffer her to be constrained; the body must not be bound up with rollers, nor smothered with the heat of flannel, be used with a mistaken delicacy, and too closely preserved from the inclemency of the weather. But I must not enter into particulars. Only this I shall say, that he is so unfashionably polite, as to consider

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* The reader may find a concise and excellent history of the understanding, and the passions, in the *Præceptor*, Vol. II. Book i. Sect. 1. A performance that the editor fears to commend, lest he should injure it by his praise.

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the mother's suckling her own child, as one of the indispensable obligations of nature; as a duty that can never be transferred to another, except in a case of the utmost necessity: and, indeed, had I been as averse to conviction upon this head, as the gay fine lady at court, I must have either renounced all pretensions to reason, or suffered myself to own the force of his arguments.

BUT his first study is to cultivate the understanding, or, as Mr Thompson expresses it,

To teach the young idea how to shoot.

the noblest employment that can exercise the attention of a reasonable being! an employment that, however, must, at present, be confined within a narrow compass; since, for some time, it can only consist in preserving the confused undistinguishing capacity of infancy from receiving bad impressions: and here the care ought, in his opinion, to begin with life itself. The tender brain must not be disturbed, nor the mind, in its first exertions, be startled by loud or sudden noises. This care increases in proportion as the mind enlarges; and as it still continues capable of receiving impressions from objects of terror, these must still be industriously excluded. About a month ago,
when

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when we were at my father's, Lucius was very much ruffled at finding his daughter afraid of the dark. He was certain that, pardon the impropriety of the expression! an object that had so frequently occurred, and which must have been familiar to the child, could never excite such fear, had not its mind been taught to connect with it some unnatural and terrifying ideas. This was, in the esteem of Lucius, an affair of great importance: he searched into the cause, and found that one of the servants had frightened the pretty creature, with threats of Tom Dark, and other words, which to children are of direful sound. Would you believe it, Madam? for this cause alone, he prevailed on his mother to turn away the poor girl. I confess that I was so struck with this, that I could not forbear telling him, that I thought he behaved in a very arbitrary and cruel manner: when, in justification of his conduct, he ran to his sister's closet, fetched a volume of the *Spectator*, and read, before all the servants, a performance on that very subject, that struck me dumb. However, he had no objection to my providing for the girl, till I could get her another place: and, in return for this civility, she has had the ingratitude, and the impudence, to raise a report, that Lucius had this child by

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me, before our marriage. But, in the country, no vice is indulg'd with such a keen relish as slander.

LUCIUS has been very careful in his remarks on the several ways, by which the mind of infancy is industriously impressed with the most hateful extremes of all the passions*, selfishness, pride, revenge, insolence, avarice, cruelty, and in short all the vices which spring up in after life; when the mind is ruined, without design, and the heart in sport taught to be vicious before the tongue can speak, and all the tender sensibilities of humanity are utterly perverted. Against these methods of corruption he proposes to be ever on his guard, because traces so early made are seldom perfectly erased: and, indeed, this kind of treatment ought more to be avoided, as it is infinitely more fatal in its consequences, than all the distempers that can affect the bodily health.

THIS, Madam, though of prodigious importance, is only a negative kind of education. But, to implant a love of truth, and a thirst after knowledge, to teach the young understanding

* See some hints of these methods of corruption in the note to p. 40 and 41, Vol. I. which the reader may easily enlarge, from his own observations on the conduct of parents, nurses, &c.

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ing to exert its powers; to refine, to elevate, to enlarge the ideas, and to lead the eager admiring youth, by the sweet allurements of pleasure, to the highest attainments in virtue, to rectitude of manners, to rejoice early in his immortality, and to anticipate the divine delights of heaven, by a disinterested love for mankind; a love widely extended, and ever prompting to acts of beneficence and diffusive goodness: this is an employment as noble, as the attainment is godlike, and to this does Lucius already raise his ideas; this he considers as the previous study, the earliest exercise of childhood. He proposes to dress up morality, and the sublimest truths of natural religion, in the easy * language of infancy, and by degrees to pour in more and more light as the understanding enlarges, and the mind grows more and more capacious; and by encouraging the restless curiosity natural to children, give incessant employment for the rational faculties. He considers English, as the most important of all the languages to an Englishman. His child, he says, shall study all its beauties, learn to read with a grace, and if possible to write with elegance, to adapt his

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* Something of this kind is already attempted in the Christmas Box, two small volumes printed for the use of children.

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language to his sentiments, and to express his thoughts with ease and fluency ; to form his style, and to settle his judgment, by a careful attention to the works of the most celebrated English authors ; be taught to point out their beauties, to comment on the noble sentiment, to relish, even to rapture, the tender beauties of Spencer, the lightning of Shakespeare, and the shining glory of Milton.

THE languages he considers only as the key to further knowledge, and not knowledge itself : these, even in the midst of study, he would render subservient to his grand design, and make the dry task of words delightful, by a continual acquisition of agreeable sensations, and improved ideas. He would please himself with hearing the voice of unprejudiced nature, a mind unbiassed with the forms of thinking which prevail amongst mankind, decide in what consists the merit of such and such an action ; he would hear the tongue of innocence explain the glory or infamy of an Alexander, a Trajan, or a Domitian ; he would cherish and fix the just sentiment, would improve the random thought, and, where the judgment failed, would set it right. How delightful must this exercise of the faculties be to a child ! To be led by its own reflections to a constant series

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series of new ideas—how manly, how rational the entertainment ! It must inspire the mind with a continual spring of self-complacency, and make the most rugged steps to learning pleasant. Lucius would endeavour to obtain the assistance of some decay'd gentleman, adorned, at once, with piety, good nature, learning, a knowledge of mankind, and a free and genteel address. A person of this character must be the tutor of his son, and share with him in the important task ; he must live in the family, and in all respects be treated like a gentleman and a friend. Learning will thus be made a high entertainment, especially as it will be varied, at proper intervals, by the history and constitution of our own country. Under their conduct, the aspiring youth must improve in knowledge and understanding, must be introduced early into life, emboldened, encouraged to speak, and to bear a part in the most polite conversation, at an age when learning generally consists in mere sounds, and pleasure in vanity and folly : and, while a youth, we shall have the rational delight of seeing our child a man, a friend, a companion.

I AM prepared to hear you laugh at me, and express your surprise, that, notwithstanding
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the great uncertainty of life, I can thus launch into futurity ; talk of embellishing a mind yet incapable of fixed ideas, and from an infant of two months old, by the strength of imagination, draw a line parallel to that of time, and reckon our duration by that of the sun and moon. But blame me as much as you please, some of the sweetest comforts of life depend on expectation ; and was it not for hope, which recreates the mind with distant prospects of pleasure, our very enjoyments would be apt to flatten, and life itself grow dull and insipid. But it is not only a remedy for the vapours, and the most effectual cure for the restless mind ; it is a cordial comfort to the distressed, and joy to the miserable.

EDUCATION, Madam, is a daily topic of discourse, a subject to us the most interesting ; can my friend then think it impertinent ? But if it appear so now, as you will soon be a mother, you will soon be convinced of its importance. Lucius is now so fond of it, that he talks of little else ; he is continually quoting to me the best authors on the subject, and from these I have collected my ideas, which, as they are ever present to my mind, I should have found some difficulty to suppress.

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HASTEN, dear Madam, by your presence,
the happiness of

your affectionate

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLVIII.

HOW tedious is time, when his wings
are loaded with expectation! My
last, I imagined, would have concluded our
epistolary correspondence, at least for some
years. I proposed to throw aside my pen, to
bid an eternal adieu to tedious narrations, high
flights, rapturous nonsense, and long letters; but
the very morning in which we were preparing
to set out to meet you, with an alacrity inspi-
red by our joy, to be disappointed with a fort-
night's delay, what a damp did it give to my
spirits! I could hardly meet with a greater
disappointment. Let me have no more of
your letters, Madam, I beseech you. A fort-
night! fifteen days!—indeed it is quite into-
lerable.

WE have had a very diverting account from
my sister Marilla, of a most singular courtship.
My wise cousin, it seems, has had the misfor-

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tune to fall desperately in love with that engaging lady. The mighty wound was given at our house ; but he had not there the power to make it known : he waited for a more favourable opportunity, which he had the penetration to foresee might soon arrive: and, therefore, recommending himself as the best coachman in the universe, he earnestly begged, that she would do him the honour, to suffer him to drive her home in her chaise. She readily consented to the proposal, and he, perhaps, drawing a favourable conclusion from her easy compliance, was all life and thankfulness.

THEY accordingly mounted, and had drove but a small distance from the house, when his natural self-conceit proving too strong for his bashfulness, he could not resist the present moment, and, accordingly, began with praising himself ; a method of courtship, though a little uncommon, not altogether irrational : for as a person, desirous to exchange a sorry piece of goods for a better, should prudently confine all his oratory to one side, so he imagined, that he ought to give her a high opinion of his own merit, and not, by encreasing her vanity, by a misapplied flattery, make the disproportion greater than it really was. In consequence of this refined sophistry, and with the assistance

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of the phrase, *though I say it that should not say it*, which he introduced, at proper intervals, to shew his modesty, he began a long detail of his useful travels; and very gallantly concluded with telling her, that though he had conversed with, and even had the honour to enjoy the good graces of the finest ladies in France and Italy, he was never made a captive to the little divinity till now.

MARILLA, who had been held a good while in suspense, could not help being surprized at this declaration, which, however, she was so cruel as to turn into ridicule. The gaiety of her reply disconcerted him for some moments: but recovering himself he answered very gravely, that he loved, and would for ever love her, and that, as it was not in her power to prevent it, she ought to think of some way of making him happy, since that would be the ready way to make herself so. And that she could never have a better husband; since he would do all in his power to serve her.

His thoughts were so taken up with this answer, that, quite forgetful of his office, he drove against a tree, which unluckily grew by the side of the road, when the wheel breaking, poor Marilla was thrown in the dirt, while the squire, giving a spring, flounced into an
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adjacent ditch, which happened to be full of water. Marilla, who had not received the least hurt, was presently on her feet, extending her hand to the relief of the poor dripping squire, which by his touch was as defiled as his own. She found him shaking his ears, and, with a most distressful countenance, attempting to clamber up the bank. His hat and wig floated on the stream, his face was as much besmeared as his cloaths, and his whole figure such as would have excited laughter in any other person but herself; but to her it was only an object of pity.

THE servants, who were riding at some distance, no sooner beheld his miserable plight, than they made up to his assistance, and presently set him on dry land. Having recovered his hat and wig, he began, with great confusion, to make his apology, which she interrupted, by desiring him only to mind his own health, to take one of the horses, and to ride with all the haste he could to her father's, which was then not above half a mile distant, and, ordering her servants to bring home the chaise, promised to follow him on foot. My cousin readily obeyed, and Marilla, who walks much better than most ladies about St James's, was not very long after him. She entered the house unper-

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ceived, and having washed herself, and changed her cloaths, went down to the parlour, where she found her lover sitting, with my father, by a good fire : he had been accommodated with a large dram, as a preservative from the effects of the cold, and care being taken to see him cleaned, and with fresh apparel put in a more comfortable plight, he was now in a proper situation to receive her.

WAS it possible for my poor cousin to begin his amour, under more unlucky auspices ! to be thus soufed, and, falling from his aspiring hopes, to become an object worthy of derision, rather than pity. What a painful humiliation ! But, though I lament his fate, he had still comforts, which the diffident and tender lover could never, on the like occasion, have experienced : a hidden reserve of vanity now stood his friend, and enabled him to bear up manfully under his disgrace.

MARILLA had no sooner opened the door than my cousin, who, having recollected, as he himself has since confessed, the obliging manner with which she had endeavoured to help him out of the ditch, the little care she took of herself, and her great concern for him, had not the least doubt but that she was perfectly in love with him, flew to her

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her with open arms, gave her a rude kiss, and, seizing hold of her hand, pulled her towards my father, who, as well as Marilla, was all amazement. My cousin desired his fair one not to be so coy ; adding, that as he loved her, and she loved him, their parents consent was all that was necessary to their marriage; and then, addressing himself to my father, cried, with the same vivacity, Egad, Sir, you know my fortune, lookee, and so forth, and I hope you have no objection to my having the honour of being *votre petit-fils*. The honour of being my grandson! cry'd my father, laughing; how is that? One language at a time, Sir, I beseech you. I don't understand—— He was here interrupted by Marilla, who, recovering the use of her tongue, cry'd out, What do you mean, Sir, let go my hand—— I can't comprehend what you would be at. I love you!——You!——What insolence! And now, exerting all her strength, she gained her liberty, and, instantly, flung out of the room.

As soon as she was gone, my father told him, very frankly, that he could not possibly account for this rude behavior; and that, when he came to his house in such a deplorable condition, he did not think it

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was with design to affront his daughter, which, whatever were his motives, he would not suffer. My cousin assured him, with many oaths, that he was in earnest, and that he only intended to ask his consent to marry his daughter, for that he had convincing proofs that she loved him. My father answered, that he could never believe it; but that, if it was true, he had no objection to his family and fortune; and, therefore, insisted upon knowing, what reason he had to believe that she had an affection for him. My cousin replied, with a confident laugh, that he knew well enough how to judge; and that a lady might tell she loved, without making use of words; that if my father knew all, he would be of his mind; and that after what had passed, she ought not to have given herself such airs, but it was all one, he could be as indifferent as her. Marilla now returned, and interrupted a conversation that was growing very warm on my father's side.

As she entered the room her young spark, resolving to humble her, put on a look of insensibility, and walked by her with a careless, affected, and self-satisfied air; but seeming not to observe it, she seated herself close by her father, and in a calm and complaisant manner

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desired him to sit down. He obey'd with a smile, when the old gentleman repeated his command to explain, before his daughter, what he meant by his insinuations. But he did not choose to hear him; and leaning his elbow on his knee, and staring up in Marilla's face, he asked her which of those pretty hands it was that he had the misfortune to daub, when she was so kind as to strive to help him out of the ditch. He then proposed that she should hold it out to him, that he might kiss it; called her a dear sweet fond fool, swore she could not help it; she was frightened for him, and off her guard, or else it would have been imprudent to yield so soon; that some men would like her the worse for it, but that he thought it a certain sign that she would make a good wife, since, though he was in fault, she took more care of him than herself.

MARILLA, guessing the grounds of his behaviour, heard this arrogant speech, without once attempting to interrupt him: but he had no sooner concluded, than giving him a contemptuous look, I am sorry, sir, said she, that you should put such a false construction upon my humanity. I thought your life, or, at least, your health in danger; I followed the first dictates of pity, and, instead of diverting myself

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with your misfortunes, endeavoured all I was able to remove them, and hurried you hither, where I knew you could be supplied with necessities, till you received them from home. But such is the return that the least act of kindness meets with, from narrow and selfish minds. Yet, I assure you, Sir, I am not sorry for the little I have done, with an intent to serve you: It spreads no blush on my cheek, it gives no uneasiness to my heart. There is not a creature living, that I would not have served with equal tenderness. But how could your vanity suggest such a motive for my endeavouring, without any hurt to myself, to serve the brother of Amelia, and a near relation to my sister Felicia? What a wretched heart must you have, while you can form no idea of generosity, humanity, or compassion, without the allay of a particular affection! I wish you well, I confess, and more so, as the happiness of a worthy family is, in some degree, connected with yours: but, at the same time, I must be so plain as to tell you, that I neither do, nor ever can love you. Your vices are an unsurmountable obstacle. Your travels, which might have been of service to a man of sense and virtue, only serve to disgrace you, and display your ignorance and folly.

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folly. Forgive me, Sir, I mean not to reflect on any involuntary imperfection; were you as kind to yourself as nature has been, you would be much more tolerable. But your debauchery, your boasted lewdness, and that impious custom of swearing, the unmannerly vice of a bully, must for ever exclude you from the affection of any woman, who has sense, virtue, or true delicacy. Indeed, Sir, if you would be happy here, you must endeavour, at least, to copy your cousin Manly, and, like him, aspire to be happy hereafter. He, I dare say, enjoys more true delight from the reflections of his own mind, in one day, than you, with your boasted swing of pleasure, in the compass of a year. Ay, than in the compass of an eternity, cried my father, with an eagerness which could arise from nothing but a conviction founded on experience: I know it, Sir, I feel it every day.

I BELIEVE, Madam, you will think Marilla's reproof much milder than my cousin's insolence deserved: she had, indeed, a favourable opportunity to humble his pride, and, by opening his eyes to his own follies, to lay an obligation on his whole family: to this point then she generously directed her views. Indeed, had she not treated him with such forcible

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ble severity, all she could say would have been useless. His mind is so extremely callous, that fine raillery, though ever so sharp, would not have hurt him.

THE youth, struck with the ease of a conquest which he fancied he had too soon obtained, began already to think of my sister with indifference. His elbow was still on his knee; and his eyes, with the utmost confidence, fixed on hers: but she had hardly uttered three or four sentences, when surprise, vexation, and disappointment, appeared by turns on the stiff muscles of his unmeaning face, that was not at all formed to express his ideas; and yet these were wrought up in so strong a manner, as to give deformity to every feature: and at last, as if blasted by the indignant look of virtue, he sighed, hung down his head, and sat abashed and confounded.

THE bare idea of losing, for ever, what he, just before, was ready to despise, made him almost distracted. His humility was now no less extravagant than his vanity before, it sunk even into meanness, and the most abject submissions; he rose, walked about the room, sat down again, wept, began to swear, and stopped short before the execration was finished, and, at last, after the solemnest protestations,

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ons, that he never loved her a hundredth part so well, as he did that moment, told her that he wished from the bottom of his heart, that she had not a farthing in the world, or (to use his own elegant phrase) a smock to her back, that he might let her see his sincerity.

MARILLA says, that it was impossible for her to avoid smiling, and instantly thanking him for his good wishes. As to my father, he burst into laughter: a fine speech truly! said he, a most generous lover! so you would have her be a beggar, that you might force her to be miserable your own way. We are all greatly obliged to you. My cousin endeavoured to vindicate himself, and after saying and unsaying, affirming and retracting, at last, with much hesitation and stammering, he made shift to declare, that he only meant to say, that he should be glad of an opportunity to convince her how very much he loved her.

BUT, Madam, I try your patience too much, as well as tire my self, in thus dwelling on circumstances that you may think beneath your notice. I shall only say, therefore, that by the time his servant had returned, with linnen and other cloaths from my aunt's, he began to be more reconciled to his fate, and, after having dressed himself afresh, took his

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leave, with a tolerable grace. Not all the reasoning in the world, could have made him so sensible of his folly, as this disappointment has done. Love seems to have refined his mind, and to have given a larger scope to his understanding. He shuns his old companions, and, for the present, at least, has thrown off his favourite vices. It has taught him the use of reflection; and, in short, if this reformation continues, we may have the happiness to see him have a just claim to that respect and complacency, which is ever due to the character of an honest man: a title the most significant, as it carries in itself the idea of intrinsic worth and excellence.

AFTER all, a union between my cousin and Marilla would be extremely agreeable to me, could I be but once convinced of the sincerity of his reformation; since it would not only give a closer cement to the two families, but might happily confirm that virtue, which has yet scarcely taken root.—But why do I mention this? it is a thing altogether impracticable: she will not suffer me to speak of it: his want of sense is alone in her esteem an unsurmountable obstacle. The deficiency, she says, is on the wrong side, and she could never have a sincere esteem for a husband, who was acknowledged by all her acquaintance to be greatly her
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inferior. And, indeed, I must confess that I think her in the right.

LUCIUS and I propose to meet you at Leicester. I sincerely wish you a safe and agreeable journey, and, am, as you will ever find me, when our friendship will be supported by a nearer intercourse,

YOUR LADYSHIP'S

faithful friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLIX, *and last.*

*From CHARLOTTE to Lady HARRIOT * * *.*

DEAR MADAM,

DID not I tell you, that I would not write till I could send you word how I liked my situation? Why then should you complain that I have kept my word? I am in a new world, and three months is surely time little enough to form a judgment, where every thing I see, and every thing I hear, is as great a novelty as if I had been transported to some unknown region. Conceive, if you can, how surprising it must be to me, who never beheld any thing but the splendors, or, as I now chuse to call them, the tedious ceremonies of a court,

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a court, to meet with artless simplicity and plain dressed truth, instead of polite flattery and high strained compliment; and, in the room of every gaudy folly, to behold pure nature and white-robed innocence, and felicity arising from a strict conformity to their dictates.—But, I believe, Madam, a particular account of my reception, and manner of life, will not be disagreeable. To begin then

As I intended to surprise them, by arriving an hour or two sooner than they expected, I was not above five miles from the end of my journey, when I was met by Mr Manly and my friend. We had like to have passed by each other, but Felicia, happily observing the coronets on my chariot, called me by my name. I gave them a look: their door flew open, and both Lucius and she were at mine, before any of our fellows had time to dismount. I was surprised, I confess, at this piece of indecorum: O the dear hoyden! cry'd I to myself, and the servants stared as if they were ashamed of their own insignificance. The eyes of both my friends sparkled with pleasure, their rapidity and eagerness soothed my friendship, while my heart fluttered and said, To follow nature is the height of good breeding. One of my servants presently opened the door of
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the chariot, when I could do no less than step out to embrace them. But I shall take no notice of the endearing compliments that passed between us. Felicia's cheeks were moistened with a tender testimony of her joy, I was compelled, by friendship, to leave my woman to ride alone, and to give them my company in their own coach, in which, in a kind of triumph, they carried me to the end of our journey.

WE soon arrived at the house, a large plain edifice, situated in the midst of an earthly paradise, where I found an entertainment rather hospitable and friendly, than profuse and magnificent. I was welcomed with the most obliging testimonies of joy, and as they concluded, that I must be weary with my journey, I was early conducted to my apartment, the most sumptuous of any in the whole building, and though there is nothing like grandeur in the furniture, there is a neatness and elegance that at first engaged my attention: every thing is like the owners mind, plain and beautiful. Such was the idea Felicia had given of me to her few select friends, that, from the first moment, wherever I appeared, I seemed to inspire joy; their hearts were as open as their houses to receive me, and all of them actually strive

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strive who most shall contribute to make my residence in this delightful place as agreeable as possible. But after all, you can't imagine, Madam, what a rustic creature this Felicia is grown; why, she is such a walker, I can't keep pace with her half the length of a small field. I laugh at her activity, and mimic her country stride, while she, with the greatest good humour, ridicules my mincing step, and endeavours to put me out of conceit with some little peculiarities, which she calls affectation. Mr Manly has, indeed, every perfection that my lovely friend has attributed to him: believe me, he has nothing of the swain, but simplicity, and an artless heart; nothing of the courtier, but the unaffected ease and freedom of his behaviour: and such an esteem I have already entertained for him, that I had rather hear him talk, than listen to the compliments of the finest beau in christendom. Nay more, I love him; love him as I should my guardian angel, were I permitted to see his person, and hear his heavenly admonitions. If it should please the director of all events to suffer me to be safely delivered of a boy, where shall I find a tutor like him? I would not, for the world, deny him the happiness of being brought up with his son. Should I live to

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see the image of my dear deceased lord, growing up under his care, what a sweet addition would it give to my reveries? with what pleasing sympathy should Felicia and I behold the two prattling infants, daddling before us, through the garden, or the fields, while we, with hearts filled to the brim with maternal love, and social friendship, walk slowly after, talking of refined delights, and raising our souls on the wings of heavenly affection and gratitude. The little cherubim, when lying on Felicia's lap, puts me in mind of the Venus, and infant Cupid, I have so often admired in my uncle's closet. I need not tell you that he is a lovely boy, when I make use of this comparison; a comparison that would wrong him, if I did not add, that it only holds good while he sleeps; for when awake his bright blue eyes destroy the resemblance.

THE first visit I paid was to Marilla, who is the same engaging creature that Felicia has always described her: she has a good deal of learning, a great deal of fine sense, and a vast deal of that tender humanity, that unlimited goodness of heart, which, uncircumscribed by the ties of blood, or the distinctions of religion, grasps at the happiness of every human creature. In this she resembles Lucius, to
whom

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whom she is nearer allied by a kindred of soul, than by all the ties of nature. He considers man as man, and himself as a citizen of the world; and they both regard the whole universe, however varied by the complexion of different regions, however distinguished by religions, customs, and manners, as having a reciprocal claim to benevolence, and the kindest acts of humanity. In this visit to Mr Manly's, I was entertained with the same affection as if I too had been married into the family: Marilla received me with open arms, and the good lady, her mamma, expressed almost as much tenderness for me, as for Felicia, or her own daughter, while my friend, smiling at their caresses, seemed to set a higher value on them, than on those bestowed on herself. What a difference is there, Madam, between this frank behaviour, this unreserved freedom of mind, and all the low acts of disguise, the empty formalities, the modes and forms of greatness! The openness of their countenances made it impossible for me to be under the least restraint. In an hour's time, I was as free and intimate with every one of them as Felicia herself; I told them I knew all their affairs, and enquired of Marilla whether she was yet inclined to admit the addresses of Felicia's cousin

cousin. She reddened a little; but immediately replied, that was it possible for her to be in love with a vicious man, let his person and behaviour be ever so engaging, she would never admit his addresses; since this would be to hazard both her present and eternal happiness; that, in this case, it would be her duty to do violence to her heart, and, by a glorious effort, endeavour to conquer herself: how then could she ever think of being so nearly united to a man, whom, though she would not despise, she could never love!

BUT, said Mr Manly, with a smile, my daughter has another motive to refuse him, which, notwithstanding the extraordinary frankness of her temper, she has had the art to conceal. A young clergyman, nearly related to Mr Stevens, is lately returned into this part of the country, where he has obtained a small living: but, though his circumstances are but very indifferent, he has every other qualification that can recommend him to my daughter. He was last week accidentally in her company; and I am informed that she has made a conquest, which she cannot but approve; I had this information from Felicia's cousin, who makes a great merit of the discovery, and says, that though the clergyman de-

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despairs of ever obtaining her, and has declared, that he shall never have the presumption to attempt it, yet, in his opinion, I ought to watch her close, lest she should be prevailed upon to throw herself away.

DURING this speech, Marilla had a constraint and awkwardness in her air, which shewed her at a loss how to behave: but she was soon relieved by Felicia, who, after expressing some indignation against her cousin, asked if the gentleman was not educated at Cambridge. Mr Manly answered, that he heard so. On which she told him, that she had once the honour of his company with Mr Stevens, Lucius, her aunt, and Amelia, in a visit they paid at my † Lord M****'s; that she was greatly pleased with his conversation, and believed him to be a gentleman of uncommon merit. It was easy to see, that Marilla did not hear this encomium with indifference, though she had the presence of mind instantly to change the subject.

MARILLA, who had yet, as she told us afterwards, no more than a high opinion of the merit of this reverend gentleman, an esteem, which rather encreased than disturbed the tranquility of her mind, had soon a very favourable opportunity to see if it was worthily placed.

† See Letter VIII.

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She had no difficulties to encounter with ; her father, and every one of the family were devoted to her happiness. Mr Manly, disgusted with the follies of life, rejoiced at the prospect of disposing of his daughter, to a person of intrinsic worth ; he only wanted to know, if his information was well founded, and this he easily accomplished. He invited Mr Stevens and the clergyman to dine with him, and blotting out the name of the young esquire, shewed them the letter as a mean attempt to injure them in his esteem. The modest clergyman, struck with confusion, blushed, trembled, and confessed the truth ; at the same time assuring him, with many protestations, that, though it was true he loved Marilla, he never had the presumption to aspire to the least hope ; and that, whatever had been the consequence, he had resolved never to mention it to her. But Mr Manly interrupted him ; by letting him know that he was not displeased, that he had a very great esteem for him, and that though his daughter's fortune would be now very considerable, the disproportion could not be great, since he did not doubt, if virtue, piety, and good sense would do, but that in time he would wear the mitre, and that, if he could gain his daughter's affection, he would be no obstacle to their union.

You

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YOU must not expect, Madam, that I should here describe his rapture, or tell the wise and silly things he said, and did. He was, in a moment, raised from despair, almost to the possession of his highest wishes: if then he did not behave at this instant like a madman, or a fool, I should have no opinion either of his love, or his wisdom. However, he was introduced to Marilla, who received him with the deference due to his merit: he saw her every day, and she every day becoming more sensible of his value, in about six weeks time they were married.

THE young squire, though he had no great reason to hope, could not bear to lose the possibility of obtaining her, much less to see her in the possession of another; and, therefore, as if his reformation had been only a pretence, threw it aside, as being now of no service to him. He cursed her and himself, stormed like a madman, swore to abandon himself to every vice, went out, and got so drunk, that he was obliged to be carried home, and the next day was seized with a fever, from which he recovered with difficulty. The idea of the immediate approach of death, filled his mind with horrors not to be expressed. Dreadful, indeed, were the conflicts of his despair, but these

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these were at last removed, by prayer and penitential tears : and, indeed, this sickness seems to have produced a real reformation. He is but just recovered, and may now live, and yet be no disgrace to his family ; he may have a just claim to the complacency of his friends, and may arise as high as his capacity will suffer him, to the degree of an honest husband, perhaps, a plodding country 'squire, and a well-meaning justice of the quorum.

My whole attention is to contribute, by an easy chearfulness and good humour, to the satisfaction of a narrow circle of friends, and to furnish fresh matter for their amusement. It is their task to improve, mine only to divert. Marilla, who has not yet retired to her new habitation, graces our little society more frequently than before her marriage, and with her comes the agreeable youth, who has the honour of her nearest friendship. I want words to express the height of of their felicity ; he, as well as Lucius and Felicia, is considered by Mr and Mrs Manly, as the pride of their little family ; as their happiness and glory. I hardly ever knew a man of finer sense, or more generous sentiments ; I could not have imagined, that a person could be found, so nearly resembling Lucius.

It

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IT is now, Madam, that I begin to live, to know myself, and to know the human mind, which, in this place, appears stripped of every disguise. True felicity dwells here; here is peace and joy. I taste the delight of the most sprightly and improving conversation, I read, I give a full scope to my reflections; and these employments alternately fill up my time. I sometimes venture to walk out alone, and, wrapt in sober contemplation, trace the hidden recesses of my own heart.

WOULD you believe it? I am grown a very enthusiast. I fall in raptures at the lovely face of nature. And were you to see me, when I walk in the garden, or the adjacent fields, or when, to enlarge the landscape, I view from the turret, the wide prospect stretching in a long level, till, resembling a distant sea, it mingles with the clouds; were you, in these moments, to hear my rhapsodies, and be a witness of my extravagancies, even you, with all your partiality for me, would be tempted to think me mad.—But, perhaps, you are not far from thinking me so at present: however, it is best to conclude while I have room to assure you, that I have the honour to be

YOUR LADYSHIP'S most sincere friend

CHARLOTTE.

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